

# **Standing on a Landmine, Caught in Indecision and Apathy.**

## **Why Sustainable Community Collaboration Building is Critical**

**By**

**Richard C. Lumb<sup>1</sup> and Gary J. Metz<sup>2</sup>**

### **Introduction<sup>3</sup>.**

We pass through life on a moment by moment basis, focused mostly forward, missing the events that occur on a 360-degree manifestation around us. We focus on family, work, events, appointments, and of late, constant interruptions by various people and circumstances. These interruptions are an awareness of crime and violence, the philosophical rants and social occurrences that disrupt, the focus of media on nonsense, and we begin to weigh out of life's chaos seeking an explanation to that which is disruptive and harmful to one's physiological health and psyche wellbeing.

Like the film strip of a movie, there is a direct connection, but each frame separates it. That space between frames in life, are moments where our attention focuses on other events requiring attention. Remove various frameworks and the totality of the movie changes, and it must, as aspects of the earlier continuum are missing. We suspect that certain aspects break off and are stored in mind to be categorized and left to accumulate as supporting information to the totality of topical information.

But not all things carry the same level of importance, thus the fragmentation to which we allude. We have borrowed from an earlier manuscript. Lumb, R. & Metz, G. (2017). Substance Abuse Interventions. Amazon.com. ISBN-13: 978-1548713324

For information to adjust our thoughts; doing so as linking information continues, and its value of inclusion is deemed essential to future outcomes. While we may seek and desire a solution, the superfluity of ongoing events is never-ending, with no sustainable solution emerging, leaving us in a state of apathy and indecision.

### **I. A Poignant Example of Apathetic Collaboration Weakness.**

The substance abuse problem raging across every town, city, county, state and the entire country is perhaps the grimmest of examples, for it diminishes us as a people, a nation, and defies all attempts to control it. We never ask the question why? We continue to spend massive amounts of money through numerous public and private agencies to include law enforcement, criminal justice engagement, medical and mental health services, social,

---

<sup>1</sup> . Richard Lumb is an Emeritus Associate Professor and Chair of Criminal Justice at the College of Brockport, SUNY. He currently is an Adjunct for the Justice Studies Program at the University of Maine at Augusta.

<sup>2</sup> . Gary J. Metz is an Associate Professor of Health Science, the College at Brockport, SUNY.

<sup>3</sup> . <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/problem-solving-watch-richard-lumb/?published=t>

treatment, and multiple other fragmented programs, many of whom operate independent of others, a schism of individual and social existence that exists despite the rhetoric and massive response. It supersedes all attempts to control, a juggernaut black hole into which many succumb and never regain former balance. The list of harm, grief, devastation, and death continues unabated, a discouraging stigma lacking positive outcomes.

Data to illustrate these points. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-the-costs-of-drug-abuse-to-society-63037>

- A. 23.5 percent of Americans are addicted to alcohol and drugs. And it continues to rise.
- B. Only 11 percent of addicted receive treatment in health care facilities.
- C. Of the remaining 89 percent, they live with their addiction.
- D. The World Health Organization estimates that 2 billion people abuse alcohol, 185 million abuse drugs, and 1.3 billion continue to smoke.
- E. Deaths are due to alcohol and drug abuse. However, prescription drugs, household cleaners, and many other substances ingested into the body in the quest to get high.
- F. Treatment facilities see approximately 41 percent for alcohol, and 20 percent for heroin and opiates: marijuana, 17 percent of admissions.

In the United States, the familiar drugs of abuse are marijuana, heroin, cocaine, Fentanyl, methamphetamines, anabolic steroids, ecstasy, and prescription drugs. Is that not frightening? Prescriptions, one of the most regulated of drugs, accounts for 45 percent of all drug-related deaths — a glaring failure of policy accompanied by the fragmentation of services to adequately address the issues. We have an estimated cost of 820 Billion dollars a year for the effects and outcomes of drug abuse. To that amount we say "hogwash" for we do not know, do not account for any breakdown of costs, and the total, if known, would exceed current reality. We live in a "feel-good society" fraught with the inability of some to cope with even the most insignificant of pressures, surrounded by a disconnected system that is unable to restore sanity to this socially devastating problem.

A glaring example of hidden costs and effort by those representing the criminal justice system illustrates the complexity and fragmentation of functioning in a larger world of social chaos, where collaboration begs concurrence but encounters barren response.

Every police call has a cost, and it begins when someone picks up the 911 telephone and dispatches an officer. The officer engages and includes other aspects of several services, as needed, seeking rapid resolution and disconnect in anticipation of other calls requiring attention. Who are these others dependent on immediate needs, including medical, emergency response, hospitalization? Mental health, social services, incarceration, and other diverse multipliers, each with a cost that is not captured on a case by case issue. Budgets and expenditures link to individual agencies, but with the inclusion of the same client, who draws from all, who seemingly fail to see or address that connection. Duplications occur with a substantial tilt toward immediate attention, and the handoff occurs to allow solving new cases

as presented. Lost to all are the total expenditures and lack of cost awareness, which should indicate a return on investment consideration. Knowing that might change the fragmentation and disconnect that would lead to a sustainable solution to the problem. We, society, are complicit and, in our absence from seeking sustainable solutions are guilty of doing nothing to ensure appropriate outcomes.

We do criticize these services; they do what they have done for decades, in a system of silos, historically correct, but presently inept to the changing demands. A call for service is received, a person dispatched, the first response; all the while knowing additional requests will be waiting that necessitate quick resolution. That is true for all services who engage. If we were to track person "A" through the maze of public and private agencies associated with that individual, the total expenditure of engagement would boggle the mind.

### Potential Service Engagement in the Life of an Addicted Person

1. Family grief
2. Physical health assistance
3. Substance abuse assistance
4. Medical or mental health care
5. The attention of the criminal justice system
6. Dependence vs. contributing to society
7. The lack of agency communications
8. Division of the family unit
9. Loss of work and income.
10. Dissension among public and private agencies
11. Engagement of multiple services
12. The contributing side bears the costs
13. Funding whose results are questionable

The following narrative is an abbreviated illustration whose complexity is inadequately described, but painting a picture of reality, which in its present state of being, is inadequate.

How do society, groups, and individuals cope? In truth, we do not! The escalation of the current example, substance abuse, is but one of multiple social issues plaguing society. There are more, all of which draw resources from limited availability, which to the passive mind, appears appropriate. More seems better, but the lack of empirical evidence of waste and a lack of sustainable solutions, coupled with apathy indicating we no longer circle the wagons. Are we content to complain but fail to decisively act and determine sustainable solutions? We appear content to plod across the barren desert, a wasteland of hopelessness or dreaming of fantasy solutions whose presence are elusive.

We revert to fantasy, justify, and seek to hide in a mantra that says nothing of outcomes. It allows many to feel okay the scourge that continues to tear society apart. Legalization of Marijuana is one of those fulfilled quests, yet 17 percent of thousands who seek help, represent

the larger population of users! Statistics indicate a guess, for we do not know the actual cost and engagement of large and diverse participation, fragmented as it exists. Skepticism, doubt, and frustration are indicators of reality, additional glazing of the problem without adequately addressing it.

### The Difficulty of Change.

Change is possible; however, it demands a depth of thinking beyond current conditions. The pain, a reprieve for some, still lacks finality of solution. The American taxpayer cannot continue to shoulder this cost for it strips the country of money required to bring improvement to quality-of-life needs. Poverty, substantially improved education, work skills, and requisite knowledge and training, reduced crime and violence, appropriate health maintenance, and the decline of hate and the evils of partisan politics demand accelerated attention.

When we speak of the cost, it is not an either-or situation; for there exists a cost generally left out of the discussion. There is no magic funding source; it mostly comes from the public in the form of taxes and other fees. Infrastructure, housing, health care, and many other positive indicators of life-quality are addressed when we enter into sustainable planning and collaboration, a focus on goals and the everyday needs in glaring existence. The expectation that money expenditure is the solution exists in the minds of some but is an illusion as they ignore to achieve personal agenda satisfaction.

## **II. The Path Forward**

Sustainable community collaboration building (SCCB) is an applied program to assist public and private organizations, responders to the same client, to determine sustainable solutions that result in the elimination of future service requests. For far too many people demand these services, the problem, not resolved, reoccurs continuing the demand for service that is inadequate.

Many agencies provide service to the same client, but without collaborative engagement to coordinate common goals and outcomes, fail in the long view of expressed resolution. Without a clear pathway to sustainable solutions, the repeat calls syndrome persists. Few agencies track costs for individual calls, thereby not knowing the full impact on the same person, location, situation, and other variables. Not knowing if concerted efforts achieve their goals, is ineptness, and illustrative of the apathy that exists.

It is not inconceivable that a person who comes to the attention of a service agency does not associate cost and solution planning to determine if appropriateness is occurring. There is a sequence of events involving others where time, personnel, and the expenditure of resources are unknown, contribute to limited successful outcomes. Should we not know to permit planning and steps that result in sustainable solutions?

Unless we achieve sustainability, engagement often repeats itself many times. When answers are not forthcoming, we must question the sense of multiple agency engagement, resulting in no satisfactory outcome.

We are aware that every community must engage in addressing problems and seek sustainable solutions. We do not focus on the day-to-day efforts taken that result in the completion of the tasks at hand. Our emphasis is on persistent issues, those problems of a critical nature, that impact the quality-of-life of people who suffer from a lack of positive outcomes. Ask yourself what is most troubling!

We address this dilemma offering a hands-on and applied program to guide the development of a cohesive working group charged with the examination of the problem allowing informed decisions. This step leads to the construction of a sustainable solution plan, implementation steps, and evaluation to determine outcome effectiveness.

#### Contributors to Inertia.

Dependence on the government to determine solutions, and addressing problems, removes individual and group responsibility transferring it to others. That mindset indicates the resolution of issues and the disengagement of further inquiry that is not needed. Is it trust or a willingness to abdicate to others, remaining? We suspect it falls along a continuum.

1. The individual's need to engage.
2. Comfort knowing others are involved.
3. A lessening of concern by a willing choice.
4. Abdication of responsibility to others.

We are dependent on the government to provide a single solution to problems. Passing the issue to someone else allows us to avoid the hard choices, engagement, taking the time we prefer to apply elsewhere; avoids the troubling question, is accompanied with the desire to keep it at arm's length. However, we must realize that the government is not funded to allow unlimited engagement in fixing domestic issues and persistent problems. Nor, do they solicit the employees and broadened viewpoints of many diverse people, whose experience and expertise might well be a key to the desired solution. And, while we prefer not to venture where "Angles fear to tread," it is a misnomer whose reality is false.

Isolation and withdrawal of engagement is the bane to sustainable fixes for it reduces the volume of input, the depth of ideas, and restricts reciprocal planning required to examine all aspects of the potential solutions. The interdependence of thought and action, combined with a willingness to engage with others has no substitute. The collective engagement of people with a focus on the issue, personal knowledge, and experience, is a commitment to a powerful

choice. What is accomplished through collaborative partnerships is unparalleled as the potential mechanism of achieving sustainable problem-solving success is present.

There can be no hierarchy of power represented, self-appointed by position, authority, service obligation, or assumed expertise. When people bring skills, knowledge, experience, and a quest for a solution to the table; it substantially increases deliberation and significance.

When citizens, elected and appointed officials, engage in genuine collaboration, seek to identify and find sustainable solutions to existing problems, the improvements may be substantial. Multiple people ask information on progress, demand answers, and are inquisitive. That may not happen in a single public or private agency effort. Budget, assignment of personnel, limitations of service knowledge, problem identification, and process are constraints that usually are overcome when the group is vested and personally engaged.

#### The Case for a Collaboration Model.

Seldom do we fully understand the exact assignment of services applied to a situation, for those involved may not be aware outside their expertise. When multiple agencies are engaged, but separate from each other with limited collaboration, sharing of data, engagement in determining the best practices or course of action, that void carries consequences. Two independent agencies, working with the same problem issue, but separate, create natural barriers to successful outcomes. Confidentiality of service seeks to protect the client, may create additional schisms that otherwise would be addressed. The question asks, how can multiple services effectively determine a sustainable solution maximizing the collective efforts of agency and client?

When silos of service and multiple entities assist the same client, expend resources without evaluation of outcomes, it seldom results in achieving desired results, if finality is a factor. We might surmise a needed extension of time and service to align and maximize effort; if the goal is a permanent and positive change to some problem that has existed for years. Isolation of service may contribute to contradictory or harmful actions, as would not provide for a critical component of causation that was missed in the evaluation.

It is a controlled form of chaos and does not fulfill an improved process of problem-solving. We are aware of the constrictions, the limitations that occur, and the imposed constraints requiring adherence by those in the game. It is challenging to determine the contribution to the client's wellbeing when the providers are unaware of it themselves.

A coalition of people, organizations, and stakeholders determine the collection and application of comprehensive information as a critical first step. Outcomes emerge from the confidentiality of sharing information, working collaboratively, and an absence of distraction and separate engagement. Harm may occur when one individual or group demands dominance, thereby weakening "team collaboration" and "equal status" of group members focused not on themselves, but the problem being addressed. The client is not a passive recipient unless some

condition prevents active engagement. Sharing of information, database development, and the analysis of data to expand knowledge and understanding remain vital contributors. These actions enable informed decision-making. Full disclosure of what is known, causation influences, evaluation outcomes, the goals aspired to, and the measures needed to achieve positive and lasting change are critical elements of decision-making.

### Example.

The following is a true story, the outcome a sad commentary to the division of role and isolation of services resulting in an exclusion that contributed to the death of the client.

Curtis was of high intelligence, learning as a student not problematic, and accompanied with a quiet disposition, a ready smile, and tendency to follow others when something appealed to him. The originating incident that introduced him to drugs is unknown. Nonetheless, he became addicted to both illicit and prescription substances, and life changed for him, his family, and friends; until it ended prematurely.

Drug dependence diminished family engagement, academic pursuit fell away, and troublesome behaviors entered his life. Suspended from high school, listlessness, the need to be with "friends" and other addicts prevailed the family life previously known. The easy solution of the public school was to suspect the student, removal of a young man's single connection with society at that age. A meeting by parents with school officials met with rebuffing any interest to contribute to a solution. Easier to reject the individual, failing to determine that friends and others associated with the significant problem, a choice that never entirely cut the individual from a silent presence. Friction with parents caused argument and anger, and on occasion, storming out of the house. Parents fearful of what they were observing increased concern and insecurity.

Parents love their children, and when experiencing this environment is initially at a loss of what to do, including obtaining appropriate help. With substance abuse, the confusion is substantial due to the changing nature of the issues and the behaviors of the individual. The cord is not severed initially, as the young person retains needs that are unavailable outside of familiar parental home and concern. However, the lure of drugs is powerful, and the widening gap they create are difficult to combat and overcome, due to their rapidly changing nature.

Multiple solutions were attempted, none with the resulting outcome of abstinence. Seeking help often a complex combination of conflicting information, most of it stating the "ideal" action, but short on specifics or a link to a tried and true recommendation where adequate steps and engagement of diverse expertise was present and practical to what must take place. Imagine the daily fear for the son, reaching out time and again, but never achieving the needed help and with that realization, seeking the next hoped-for help.

Most agencies and organizations have fall back positions if they are not directly involved, and that is a lack of hands-on assistance. Or, the rules justify the action, and no compromise is

possible. This expanding lack of help exacerbates the problem for those seeking aid, as in time they realize the dilemma is more extensive than anticipated, and they are left without options, a frightening condition.

With all manner of intervention failing, time is not friendly to a solution, and as the distance and worsening conditions occur, hopelessness by those who loved Curtis, turn to frustration and fear. The pull of drugs becomes the dominant controller in the life of the addicted. They maintain their "stash" of chemical substances whose destructive influence rides the pale horse of addiction, silent and waiting. They justify their journey into the dark side by taking more of the chemicals that demand prominence. They are trapped in a self-inflicted delusion where the outcome may result in death.

And so, it was with Curtis! Repeat offenses of a minor nature resulted in a sentence to the County Jail, punishment for repeat traffic offenses. It was not the Judge at fault, for the limitations of the law defined his choice of action, and to address a public order law established for the welfare of all drivers.

Incarceration deprives people of illicit drugs, and the sentence provided a period of abstinence. However, desire is not cured or result in a change of attitude, for the demand remains, not in remission, but waiting for release and access to fulfillment regardless of consequence.

Curtis father asked the County jail staff to call him before release so he could retrieve his son and get him home where hope for continued abstinence would occur. But that did not happen, and Curtis was met by those with whom he associated and taken to a celebration of release from incarceration. There, the party consisted of alcohol and drugs; a combination of intake resulted in the loss of consciousness, a panic call to 911 by the group, and emergency transportation to a hospital. Imagine the impact on the parents and other family members to learn of these events, expecting another outcome.

With time, the medical prognosis was grim, the body and brain would not recover, and death was close. The gathered family prayed, stood in silence, hoped for God's reprieve; but it was not to be. Death took the son, brother, and grandson, leaving the sadness of his dying and the anger of why it had to be.

Those who loved Curtis, still do, they grieve and tell stories of regular times, they wish it were different, and some blame themselves for not doing more. Therein lies the dilemma, for doing more may not be possible; the challenge is an enemy of gigantic proportions that dwarfs what most people can do to correct individually. The adage, "It takes a village to raise a child" is accurate, but with illegal drugs, even that may not be enough.

The resources expended, the multiplicity of services, and the separate pathways that are often disconnected contribute to this issue, are all too common. The message is clear, we remain fragmented in our approach to determining a sustainable solution to substance abuse, and we must ask, why?

In our book, (Metz & Lumb (2017:5), "Substance Abuse Interventions: Catalysts for Change," we state:

*"The invasion of illegal drugs, in combination with prescription substance abuse, has a crippling effect on individuals, families, friends, colleagues, workplace, and all other acts of being a citizen of this country. This debilitating condition is not compared with anything of a similar nature, for the extent of harm is not precisely known, but what we are aware of, is disheartening. The cost of lives lost, of futures, shredded and diminishing hope that wains daily, and this wave of despair seem impossible."*

*"Across this nation, we find a small but determined army of people representing diverse approaches to reducing harm, manage addiction, and provide recovery to the tens of thousands of individuals trapped in the grip of this devastating enigma. They provide front-line services, and they see the very people who suffer from the effects of substances that control and diminish life in all its aspects. Many are visible and provide services through organized programs; others more quietly engage in numerous ways to relieve the suffering, and still more work behind the scenes seeking change in a more personal and caring way."*

*"The unsung people who toil in the world of the addicted, who do so from a commitment personal to them; we dedicate this book. Your efforts are not unnoticed! They bring renewed hope and spur engagement by others to join with you and seek sustainable solutions to the ravages of improper use of legal drugs and illegal substances."*

However, the problem far exceeds the resources being applied. Still, not enough due to the fragmentation of approach, the gaps and missing connection from A to B to C and onward across all local, county, state, and federal programs. There is an army of enforcement, medical, mental health, education, treatment, criminal justice, and other providers who are on the front lines daily. We are not finding fault with them, for they do what they have done for decades; yet, many continue to reside in separate silos of service. Therein lie the realization this may well contribute to the issues we have faced for decades.

The cost of substance abuse is not known. We refer to the actual cost when a call is received by a 911 dispatcher, sending police, medics, and other services. If an arrest is made, numerous people will engage for a period, all bearing a cost. A single incident may well have multiple people involved, their time, equipment, support, and supplies use, but not attached to the individual needing these services. So actual costs are not known, and if they were, it would be a staggering amount of money. Is not that single awareness enough to cause careful consideration of response and follow-up?

In the book, we provide three examples of promise, where change occurs, taking place because of the superior delivery of services to the population of need and with partnerships across to other agencies and people who are also engaged. These examples illustrate the value of added inclusion of people and services, the combining of the strengths of many dedicated to a common purpose. These represented organizations are:

1. **Anuvia Prevention and Recovery Center, Inc.** Charlotte, North Carolina.
2. **Orleans County, New York State, Office of the Sheriff.** Implementation of Primary, Secondary, & Tertiary Prevention of Substance Abuse.
3. **Building Community Partnerships Model.** Assisting Agencies Plan for Success. The North Carolina, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's "Community Problem-Oriented Policing" program that was a model on building sustainable community collaboration and problem-solving partnerships.

### An Intervention Model.

Conflict, trauma, health issues, and numerous other situational events are improved when indispensable people, with skills and knowledge, join to determine solutions.

We have numerous response agencies and people that provide their expertise to a situation demanding intervention. In the public sector, consider the number of agencies, their roles, and the services they provide. How many are collaborative in the real sense, not just temporary connection, somewhat organized for the long-haul and dedicated to partnerships and service?

Illustration of agencies, where multiple expertise can make a difference, include:

- A. Health Issues,
- B. Substance Abuse,
- C. Community Debt,
- D. Crime and Justice,
- E. Job Skills Training,
- F. Mental Health Issues,
- G. Infrastructure Repairs,
- H. Homelessness and Poverty,
- I. Domestic and Family Violence,
- J. School Safety Issues and Security,
- K. Lack of Motivation by Specific Groups,
- L. Theft, Damage, Disruption, and Other Labels.

At the Morganton Department of Public Safety (MDPS), one of the department's Investigators proposed a change in procedure for the handling of child physical and sexual abuse. A call to the MDSP for such a case would result in the dispatch of an Officer whose first duty was the safety and care of the child. An investigator would respond to conduct the follow-up investigation. The child was taken to the local hospital, where a medical examination took place. The State's Department of Social Services was a mandatory call. Throughout the investigation and treatment process, it was not unusual for several agencies to engage with the child, a collection of people who were wearing their agency duty responsibilities, would at some point interview the child. As Detective Aldrich said, "Imagine the confusion, fear, and trauma to the child?"

His suggestion was to assemble those who by law or practice engage in a case, determine what all agencies needed for information, and create a single reporting form to be used for that purpose. Then, establish a response rotation list to interview the child. This action would be preceded by extensive and best practices training for agency staff who were responders. It proved to be an excellent concept that when carried to fruition, changed the level of trauma and improved the collective actions leading to sustainable solutions.

Comprehensive and collaborative interventions<sup>4</sup> provide initiatives to address complex interactions where risk and protective factors impact a person or a group. The use of environmental effects on family violence is an illustration. Promoted is the use of:

1. Service integration.
2. Comprehensive services that focus on separate problems sharing common risk factors. They also allude to the collective sharing of responsibility when addressing these problems and their intervention.
3. The engagement of community-exchange interventions that target social attitudes, behaviors, and networks.

While the overall goals and characteristics of the agencies addressing the same issue are similar in purpose, each has its own set of strategies, rules, policy, service approaches, and other agency-specific resolutions. The problem exists when more than one agency is involved (known and unknown to others); the crossover of services is confusing, and the expenditure of separate resources may not result in the desired outcome. Change in the process makes sense and should be the topic of desired agency outcomes, not as an independent organization, but in the collective imagination.

It is not a complicated process; it merely needs commitment, definition, policy, and formal MOUs that spell out how agencies and staff will work as a collective group when finding themselves in those situations.

Effecting change is difficult, and with our example of substance abuse, we consider it an enormous challenge. Reducing agency territoriality, creating models of collaboration, utilizing resources differently, establishing database systems, proper analysis staff, and coordinated efforts seem daunting; but if done, it would vanquish the current model of chaos.

We offer a model, a comprehensive focus on the problem and issues identified, to include:

1. Other stakeholders.
2. Additional expertise.
3. Professional services.
4. Citizens and stakeholders in the focus area.

---

<sup>4</sup> . <https://www.nap.edu/read/5285/chapter/9>

## 5. Government officials (elected and appointed).

The model includes a coordinated, participative, and single focus effort combining the strengths, skills, knowledge, expertise, abilities, and experience fused into a sole focus, sharing information, collaborating, planning and executing what is deemed a sustainable solution. This concept is simple but challenging to implement for reasons we all understand.

Problem-solving is an exact science, and there are many models in existence. In Charlotte, North Carolina, we utilized Herman Goldstein's Scan Analysis, Response, and Assessment (SARA) Model<sup>5</sup>. This model expertly met the demands and provided the information and analysis used to reduce crime, disorder, violence, and improve the quality-of-life for thousands of citizens. Other models have utility; the key is determining what will be used, incorporate it, and utilize in the efforts undertaken.

### Summary.

Society is dysfunction beyond a few people, with illustrations abounding of groups that are desirous of living as they choose. That poses no issue until they demand the rest of us comply with their view of the world and lifestyle. Most people, however, live their life as they see fit, and avoid the cynical and caustic rhetoric that dominates the news, media, and all other things. Common sense and loyalty to one's rights have evaporated, and many in society have resorted to the turmoil of rant and rave, a postulating and obnoxious response.

Why mention this? It dominates and removes the oxygen from the discussions. Our illustration of the chaos of substance abuse illustrates our point. When we argue about political philosophy, polarization, and total lack of action of value to millions of Americans, we cannot focus on solving persistent problems. There is no time, nor attention and the problems exacerbate.

It should not be an either/or situation, if you choose to engage in behavior that harms others, diminishes your citizenship, and demand resources provided by those who have not contributed to your harmful behavior, then public funds may not be forthcoming. Paying for illegal activities by people who are not engaged in that behavior seems wrong on its face. It also leads to a demand that public and private services must be maximized for effectiveness and efficiency, where the non-culpable is not responsible for the willing chaotic behaviors. Protecting the innocent is a duty, having forces available to do that critical, but the wholesale endorsement of practices that harm others in multiple ways, perhaps not so forthcoming. Is this harsh? Maybe, but we pass along what we hear, in addition to the demands for personal rights and demands. Society functions best when it collaborates and works in conjunction with itself to resolve issues and problems. Fragmentation acts in favor of a few, hardly the goal of a

---

<sup>5</sup> . <http://www.evidence-basedpolicing.org/refresher-sara-model-and-problem-oriented-policing/>

society who should be problem solvers and model of continuous improvement in the quality-of-life for all citizens.

### A More Empirical Approach is Warranted.

Statistics on the cost of illegal drugs and requisite enforcement, treatment, prevention, lost wages, and the large industries that have appeared are mostly years old. That speaks to the interest in being cost-effective and determining sustainable solutions.

Patrick Gallahue's, February 2013 comments are worth reading.

SEE> <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/how-much-your-money-wasted-war-drugs>

1. Enforcement of the drug control system costs at least \$100 billion a year. How well is that working?
2. Federal spending is 'around' \$15 billion. Remember that was five years ago.
3. State and local drug-related criminal justice expenditures amount to \$25.7 billion.
4. The massive spending accomplishes little and the action of law enforcement, the group we demand action from, does not impact on illegal drug sales and accompanying issues to the extent possible if joined in a collaborative approach by the dozens of stakeholders. If this is true, are we not expending time and money that should be applied to problems where positive change might occur. We do not know because we do not collaborate in enough depth, nor do we evaluate to determine where we could substantially improve.
5. We incarcerate more than 500,000 in the past four decades. The net loss from productivity, estimated in 2004 (old data) was \$40 billion annually. Today, it must be staggering.
6. What of the dozens upon dozens of public and private agencies who are involved in the worn War on Drugs, where the cost seemingly has made no difference. That is based on the continuing rise in use, legalization, and deaths — three measures of many.

### Recommendation.

As with Charlotte in 1996-2000, the "big picture" must reduce to "what can we manage" picture. We must encourage local people, paid staff, separate organizations, stakeholders challenged to step up and form collaborations and engage in a sustainable problem-solving effort; is the goal. We cannot afford the cost in dollars, the harm to people, the disjointed focus away from sustainable community capacity building to dominate.

Community collaboration is an answer. Working locally, with local people supported by the expertise required, and stakeholders bring people to the table. They determine the focus and engage in a problem-solving model of proven outcomes. Local people addressing local

problems and connecting with others will make a difference and eventually bring the issues to a halt. From many separate approaches to coordination, that time is the present.

### References.

Books that address change, sustainable community capacity building, substance abuse, and resilience, illustrating the need for inclusion:

Metz, G., & Lumb, R. (2017). Substance Abuse interventions: Catalysts for Change: Criminal Justice and Community Collaboration. ISBN-13: 978-1548713324

Lumb, R., & Metz, G. (2018). Sustainable Community Collaboration Building. ISBN: 9781727249521

Lumb, R., & Metz, G. (2019). The Casting of Blame – A Transparent and Foolhardy Quest. ASIN: B07S7N2QCB

Breazeale, R., & Lumb, R. (2019). Building Resilience: A Peer Coaching Manual. ASIN: B07TJ8KP4Z.

**From Fragmentation of Approach,  
to Organized and Participative Engagement,  
Diminishes Chaos**