**Primary Prevention Initiative (PPI) Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) Reduction Effort - Voluntary Reversible Long Acting Contraceptive (VRLAC) Jail Initiative**

 **Cocke County and Sevier County**

**Topic: Substance Use and Abuse**

**Problem Overview:**

Tennessee is experiencing a very high volume of babies born drug dependent; especially the rural counties of East Tennessee. According to TDOH, the Office of Health Statistics, Hospital Discharge Data and Birth Statistical Data, Tennessee has seen almost a 17-fold increase in the NAS hospitalization rate between 1999 and 2012. A total of 921 NAS cases were identified in 2013 alone. The East Region alone accounted for 268 of those reported cases.

On September 5, 2013, a Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome/Primary Prevention Initiative Committee was formed to address this issue. It was decided that a jail outreach would be conducted in which female inmates would be educated on NAS and how it can be prevented The health department was willing to offer Voluntary Reversible Long Acting Contraceptives (VRLACs) to the female inmates. This program empowers the female inmates by offering them the opportunity to make decisions involving their reproductive health.

**PPI Objective: To educate female inmates in the jail system on the problems (neonatal abstinence syndrome – NAS) that can occur in a newborn who is exposed to addictive illegal or prescription drugs while in the mother’s womb and the availability of voluntary long-acting reversible contraceptives (VLARC) in preventing pregnancy that may potentially result in a NAS baby.**

**PPI Project/Activity Description:** The committee piloted this program in a large (Sevier) and a small (Cocke) county within the East Region. A PowerPoint presentation and pamphlets were created to educate community partners (the local county drug court judge, sheriff, jail administrator and the jail nurse). The county director, social counselor, public health nurse, public health office assistant and a back-up person for each volunteered to take ownership for this program within their county.

On January 30, 2014, a presentation was conducted to 29 female inmates at the Cocke County Jail. After hearing the presentation, 22 women volunteered to be a part of the program and receive the VRLAC placement. A preliminary clinic was scheduled at the Cocke County Health Department on February 7th and 17th in which initial testing was conducted.

On February 25, the women were transported back to the clinic for the actual VRLAC placement. After conducting both the initial and final clinic visits, the committee was able to create registration and clinic flowcharts to expedite upcoming clinics and to make the entire process more seamless when utilized in future training efforts for other counties.

On January 30 a presentation was conducted at the Sevier County Jail to 55 female inmates. Out of the 55 females, 5 volunteered to participate in the Program. On February 6, the 5 female inmates were transported to the Sevier County Health Department for placement of the VRLAC and because of their positive experience; the program received 33 additional referrals from female inmates at the Sevier County Jail.

During the pilot process, the East Region partnered with the Family Medical Residency Program at UT Medical Center for assistance. The Residency Coordinator stated that the residents needed additional experience placing VLARCs and volunteering their skills and knowledge to the program would be the perfect way to gain that experience.

**PPI Project/Activity Outcome:**

Several presentations have been conducted to female inmates in the jails since January reaching at least 142 women. The program is prospering at a fast pace. Since January 2014, 48 women have presented to the health department and received a form of birth control as a result of the program. Of those women, 39 have received Voluntary Reversible Long Acting Contraceptives.

On average, the cost of medical care for the birth of a NAS baby is approximately $67,000. Potentially, if the program prevented each of the participants from having 1 unintended pregnancy resulting in a NAS birth, there would be a savings of approximately $3.2 million.

As a result of this program, in September 2014 the Recovery Court Judge for 4 of the counties in the East Region have started making NAS Reduction Effort education at the health department a mandatory part of sentencing for both men and women with drug related charges.

**Story Highlights – Keys to Success:**

* Innovative thinking on the part of the NAS Sub-Committee
* Community Partnerships with the local law enforcement and judicial staff and the UT Medical Center Residency
* Passion, Teamwork and Empathy of the committee members and the health department staff

**Words of Wisdom:**

* Treat the inmates with compassion and kindness throughout the process as it will make the difference in positive or negative experience which may influence their life-changing decisions going forward.
* Inform the jail personnel about the program prior to presenting to the inmates as it is very important for the success of the program for their buy in as well as the inmates.

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