

Learn to Cope wins state funding again to help fight heroin addiction

By Maureen Boyle

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BROCKTON -

The support group for parents of opiate-addicted children has escaped the governor's budget ax.

For the second year, Learn to Cope will receive \$100,000 from the state to develop programs and support groups for families across the state.

"I'm very relieved," said Joanne Peterson, founder of Learn to Cope, [learn2 cope.org](http://learn2cope.org). "There is still such a need for families."

The group was one of the lucky ones in the state to keep funding after Gov. Deval Patrick cut \$123 million in spending from the \$28.2 billion state budget lawmakers had passed through vetoes.

"The governor, I would like to think, realizes how important this is," Peterson said of the group's efforts and funding.

State Rep. Alan McCarthy, D-Bridgewater, and state Sen. Robert Creedon, D-Brockton, and other lawmakers worked hard to keep the funding, she said.

McCarthy is the one who last year first pushed for funding for Learn to Cope.

"Alan McCarthy fought very hard for us," Peterson said.

Learn to Cope now meets Monday nights at the offices of Brockton Area Multi Services Inc. in Brockton.

Peterson said the money and the group are needed now more than ever.

Since May, she has attended six funerals of young adults who died of opiate overdoses.

Heroin and opiate derivatives have been taking a steady and deadly toll in the greater Brockton-Taunton area in recent years, The Enterprise found in two special reports, "Wasted Youth" and "Deadly Surge," published last year.

A review of death certificates in 28 local communities by the paper found 113 people died of opiate overdoses between Jan. 1, 2004, and Aug. 31, 2007, and 31 died of overdoses of oxycodone, the chief ingredient in the highly addictive painkiller OxyContin.

Nationally, the use of heroin and opiates has continued to rise among eighth-graders and high school students, according to the yearly survey, Monitoring the Future.

The number of high school seniors reported ingesting heroin rose from 0.6 percent in 2006 to 1.0 percent in 2007.

A program for 13- to 17-year-old addicts was unveiled last week in Brockton. The teen program is the first of three substance abuse facilities by High Point set to open on Meadowbrook Road.

Construction has begun for a building to house men who have been court-ordered into substance abuse treatment, and another building for drug treatment is also set to be built on the site.

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