**2018 Diocesan Public Policy Committee**

**Educational Issue: Responding to the Opioid Crisis**

* From 2000 to 2014 nearly *half a million persons in the United States have died from drug overdoses.* In 2014, there were approximately one and a half times more drug overdose deaths in the United States than deaths from motor vehicle crashes.
* In 2015 more than 33,000 people in the United States died of opioid overdose, which is over 90 people each day.

Our Catholic faith tells us that we must respond to those who are facing the disease of addiction, just as Jesus responded to the sick and possessed of his day.

Bishop Matano has asked Catholic Charities to help parishes respond to this crisis from a pastoral and educational perspective. Regional Catholic Charities Directors and Justice and Peace staff have agreed to help each region develop an appropriate response in collaboration with local resources and human service agencies.

A helpful framework for faith communities is found in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services toolkit:

# Open Your Doors—offer space to recovery programs and support groups

# Increase Awareness—provide educational opportunities the create understanding and encourage compassion

# Build Community Capacity—offer training programs to build the capacity of communities to respond

# Rebuild and Restore—support individuals and families in rebuilding their lives

# Get Ahead of the Problem—focus efforts on youth and prevention

# Connect and Collaborate—join local coalitions to inform, connect, and strengthen your efforts.

# <https://www.hhs.gov/about/agencies/iea/partnerships/opioid-toolkit/index.html>

# Each parish and regional Catholic Charities will develop a response to the drug abuse crisis that fits with their needs and resources.

# Deacon Greg Kiley and Marvin Mich