



ALCOHOL & DRUG ABUSE – IN PETALUMA

PCRC Releases Zoom Forum on

the Staggering Numbers & What Our City is Doing to Stem the Tide of Addiction

On Wednesday, March 23, 2022 The Petaluma Community Relations Council hosted a Zoom forum on the increase of alcohol and drug use in Petaluma. Panelists included, health experts and law enforcement, each of whom addressed Petaluma's staggering statistics concerning abuse and addiction.

In 2022:

During his presentation, Petaluma Police Lt. Nick McGowan provided police statistics for a three-month period of January 1st thru March 23, 2022, compared to the same timeframe the year before.

- DUI up 230% (Driving under the influence police stops)
- Possession of Controlled substances up 20%
- Under the influence up over 200%
- Possession of drug paraphernalia up 130%
- Naloxone Use Petaluma Fire/Petaluma Police (a preventing death by over-dose) in 2021 = 35 (95% success rate)

For the period between February 2021 and February 2022:

- Person Crimes up 37%
- Robbery up 80%, including 2 robberies of pharmacy for opiates

When asked what he believed were contributing factors, he said, "I believe the increase in substance abuse is directly correlated to the pandemic and legislative changes."

Dr. Richard Von Feldt, Co-Founder, Panaptic Inc., is a licensed psychologist specializing in addiction in the San Francisco Bay Area. His company focuses on marijuana prevention for young people. He articulated how casual use can evolve into full blown addiction. He spoke about what addiction is, what it means to suffer from it, how this disease manifests, and how to achieve sobriety.

Other panelists included, Donna Newman-Fields, MA, CCPS, (Supervising Health Information Specialist, Alcohol and Other Drugs Prevention Coordinator, Sonoma County Department of Health Services Behavioral Health Division), and Elece Hempel, Executive Director, Petaluma People Services Center. Both spoke about substance abuse among adults and our youth.

They both reminded the audience that there are laws in Petaluma about who can serve alcohol. For example, CHAPTER 10.68 ALCOHOL-RELATED NUISANCE ORDINANCE (10.68.020 Findings, intent and purpose), which states, "According to the California State Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, Petaluma has a higher concentration of alcoholic beverage sales establishments per resident population than the statewide average." To read the municipal code click on this link:

<https://petaluma.municipal.codes/Code/10.68.020>

They also cited, Petaluma’s Alcohol Beverage Training Requirements, which covers “California State ABC laws and regulations; local City and county alcohol ordinances; civil, criminal and administrative liability; preventing/refusing sales/service to minors and obviously intoxicated patrons; checking legally acceptable forms of identifications.”

Elece also cited Petaluma’s Social Host Ordinance that apply to residences that serve alcohol.

CHAPTER 10.64 SOCIAL HOST ORDINANCE, 10.64.010 Title, which states in part, “The city council finds that in too many cases, persons having possession or control of private property who are responsible for social gatherings on that property have failed to ensure that alcoholic beverages are neither served to, nor consumed by, underage persons at these gatherings.”

It continues: “Persons who actively and passively aid, allow, or tolerate such gatherings should be held liable for permitting such gatherings, the nuisances created by them and the costs associated with responding to them.”

<https://petaluma.municipal.codes/Code/10.64.020>

Lastly, she shared a good resource tool for individuals and families effected by substance abuse and addiction: <https://petalumapeople.org/sonoma-county-substance-use-disorders-resources/>

During the 90-minute Zoom forum, panelists also addressed how and why marginalized communities have been greatly impacted by drug and alcohol abuse and addiction.

Near the end of the forum, all four panelists talked about the critical need for a sobering center in Petaluma. They mentioned that SAFE Team volunteers and Police Officers lose a significant amount of time traveling between Petaluma and Santa Rosa – time that should be spent in Petaluma serving their community. Currently, anyone in immediate need of help must be transported from Petaluma to a sobering center in Santa Rosa.

To watch the entire 90-minute program, click on: [“The Impact of Substance Abuse in Petaluma”](#)

Since 2016, PCRC has been serving its community as a nonpartisan alliance of representatives from faith-based and volunteer organizations, city government, and Petaluma residents, who engage in continued dialogue, advocating for a shared message of unity.

PCRC’s mission is to serve as a coalition of individuals and groups, promoting the values of respect, appreciation and understanding of diversity among all people in our community. By fostering positive human relations, we identify and confront discrimination, respond to the needs of our community, and serve as a source of information and advocacy.

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