

April 2, 2025

Dear LCOI Member,

We hope this message finds you in good health and spirits.

We understand that you may be wondering about the status of the Lake County Opioid Initiative (LCOI), and we want to take this opportunity to provide you with an update. We are deeply grateful for the exceptional leadership of LCOI co-founders and executive board members, Chelsea Laliberté Barnes and Dr. Mary Roberson, EdD. Their vision, expertise, and dedication have been instrumental in guiding the efforts to address the opioid crisis. While Chelsea and Dr. Roberson will continue to play an important role in the initiative, they have stepped back from formal leadership positions within LCOI.

In December 2024, a general membership meeting was held, and we elected new Executive Board members. Below is the updated leadership team:

- Jennifer Banek, Lake County Coroner – Chair
- Dr. Michael Karner, Lake County Regional Superintendent of Education – Vice Chair
- Eric Rhinehart, Lake County State's Attorney – Secretary
- Dr. Adam Rubenstein, Internal & Addiction Medicine Physician – Treasurer

The remaining board members are:

- Marah Altenberg, Lake County Board
- Chas Buschick, President, Lake County Fire Chiefs Association
- Geoff Guttschow, Police Chief, Antioch
- Hilary Harris, LPC, NCC, CRADC, CODP, Executive Director - Lake County Center
- John Idleburg, Lake County Sheriff
- Sam Johnson, Lake County Health Department Director of Behavioral Health
- Brian Smith, President, Lake County Chiefs of Police Association
- Devin Steiber, LCSW, CADAC, ACSW, PCGC, Local Recovery Coordinator, Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center
- Gregory Ticsay, Lake County Public Defender
- Karen Wolownik Albert, LCSW, CEO of Recovery Centers of America

Recently, we identified some administrative challenges within the existing framework of LCOI that required attention. The Executive Board has been working diligently to address these issues, and as of last week, we are hopeful that we have successfully resolved them. In addition, we believe it is important to recalibrate our focus to ensure that we move forward with clarity, intentionality, and purpose. To that end, we held an initial LCOI Board meeting to refine our direction and will be convening again in the coming weeks. We expect to schedule a general membership in-person meeting in the near future and will send you the details as soon as possible.

Thank you for your patience and continued support. The fight against the opioid crisis is a critical and ongoing effort, and there is much work ahead of us. We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting and continuing this important work together.

Warm regards,  
Jennifer Banek, MSN, MHA, CRNA  
Chair, LCOI