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Tempe organizations work to combat opioid epidemic during a pandemic with new grant money





Valley organizations are coming together to help others.



By: [Megan Thompson](#)

Posted at 3:17 PM, Jun 08, 2020 and last updated 1:48 AM, Jun 09, 2020

TEMPE, AZ — Dealing with a pandemic when the nation is still struggling through an epidemic.

Opioid use is still something communities are trying to get under control, including right here in Arizona.

But isolation, stay-at-home orders, and fear are fuel for substance abuse.

The Rebound Arizona is looking into how East Valley organizations are coming together virtually to continue to tackle the crisis.

"We've had this pandemic and now we have some really incredible and disturbing racial injustice," said Kristen Scharlau. "Oh my gosh."

Scharlau is a Human Services Manager in Tempe and oversees the [CARE 7 program](#).

They are part of the [Tempe Coalition](#) who recently received nearly \$30,000 from the State Opioid Response Grant to help those suffering.

The Rebound Arizona's Megan Thompson asked Scharlau about whether or not CARE 7 is preparing for a wave of new issues or if it is something they are

"Already something we're seeing," Scharlau immediately responded. "... I think what we're seeing is people just numbing their pain. People who are bored. People who are scared."

Scharlau said CARE 7 is using the funding for case management. They are checking in and finding treatment programs for those struggling with opioid and substance abuse.

They are also working to create training programs for police officers and first responders who are on mental health calls.

"I think that one of the things that's easy to forget when you're a first responder is there's a human," Scharlau said. "That's a human."

notMYkid is a Valley non-profit that is focused on prevention in teens. They will be using some of that grant money for a summer online program called [LifeSkills training](#).

"We know that typically whenever someone gets bored, that's when they start experimenting with something that is not for their best interest," notMYkid Prevention Specialist Tomas Barraza explained. "So we want to keep them engaged."

The Tempe Coalition has more plans with other local organizations to use the grant funding in the fight against the opioid crisis.

This is a list on where else the money will go:

- Providing automated prescription dispensers to seniors
- Case management for individuals with drug related crimes
- Prescriber/pharmacist training
- Youth prevention support groups
- Naloxone training (to include dissemination of naloxone)