



Spring 2017

Progress in Cleaning up the Drug Rehab Industry

In July 2016, our office established a task force into abuses in the drug treatment industry, including “sober homes.” Sober homes are group residences designed to help recovering drug and alcohol addicts, including those attending outpatient treatment programs, transition back into the community. Unlike drug treatment centers, sober homes are unregulated, which is why they are proliferating throughout our residential neighborhoods. Because there is no regulation or oversight, there is no accurate count of how many exist. Government officials who seek to regulate sober homes through local ordinances or zoning laws have been thwarted by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Fair Housing Act (FHA).

Florida’s recovery industry is now estimated at over \$1 billion, and Delray Beach is ground zero, with hundreds of rehab facilities and sober homes within city limits. Illegal kickbacks, insurance fraud and patient brokering are among the abuses within the industry. All of this fuels the growth of sober homes, some of them being operated by unscrupulous individuals who encourage drug use and other illegal activity. As a result, otherwise peaceful residential neighborhoods are degraded, public safety is endangered and the recovering addicts themselves are victimized and risk death by overdose.

That’s why we moved full steam ahead with a law enforcement task force to investigate and prosecute illegal activity in Palm Beach County’s recovery industry. Since last July, the task force has made 21 arrests. We also impaneled a Grand Jury and formed a separate task force of stakeholders and other interested parties to recommend changes to State law, which resulted in SB 788 and HB 807 that tightens marketing and referral standards, increases Department of Children & Families (DCF) oversight of treatment facilities, and strengthens patient brokering laws.

About 2 people will die each day in Palm Beach County from overdoses of heroin or other opiates, and an additional 23 people will overdose but survive because of the heroic efforts of our first responders. Last year, 592 people died in our county from opiate overdoses. Such shocking statistics deserve an immediate and powerful response. Working with our law enforcement partners, we are up to the task.

Anonymous tip? Call our Sober Homes Hotline at 1-844-324-5463.