

## DA Ryan Addresses Substance Use Disorder with Acton Seniors

District Attorney Marian Ryan recently spoke at the Acton Senior Center about the risks and impacts of the Opioid Crisis. She noted Opioids such as Percocet, OxyContin and Vicodin are frequently prescribed to alleviate pain, but these medications can have addictive effects.



The Acton Health Department invited Ryan to speak as a kickoff to a town-wide initiative it is spearheading to learn more about substance misuse, now known as Substance Use Disorder (SUD) among people 50 and over. The goal is to raise awareness, identify ways to reduce the stigma of seeking help and publicize available resources. Funding for this grant comes from CHNA 15 in partnership with Lahey Hospital and Medical Center and Winchester Hospital through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Determination of Need (DoN) process.

Ryan said that sometimes physicians overprescribe medication and then patients have more than they need to treat their condition. The risk is that this medication can be used later, become addictive and can also be accessed by others who visit the home. She also cautioned that other family members may want to access prescriptions to feed their own addiction or sell the pills. Pets are also at risk if medications are not stored safely. Ryan added "addiction is a family disease."

The town will be distributing a survey to residents who are 50 and over so that more can be learned about this growing problem in our community. In the past five years there have been a number of overdoses among older adults, some resulting in death, and that number is steadily climbing.

If you would like more information on the SUD initiative, please contact Health Director Sheryl Ball [sball@acton-ma.gov](mailto:sball@acton-ma.gov).