

**GREEK ORTHODOX LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY, INC.**  
**NATIONAL COMMITTEE REPORT**  
**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2023 – HOUSTON, TX**  
**NATIONAL PHILOPTOCHOS BOARD MEETING**



**Educational Initiatives Committee**

Co-Chairs: Savina Prokopios-Davos, Despina Denne  
Members: Demetria Bakris, Marty Driscoll, Lekita Essa, Diana Gardianos, Pat Gerbanos, Eugenia Kourlos, Maritza Pritsos, Christine Psefteas, Vickie Scaljon, Maria Skiadas, Ourania Soumas, Irene Steffas, Andrea Tiggas, Kalli Tsitsipas, Sofia Zachariadis

October 31, 2023

**The Opioid Crisis:**

Opioid addiction has become a prolonged epidemic and National crisis. Our Greek communities are not immune. It is estimated that 3 million Americans have had or currently suffer from opioid use disorder (OUD). Drug overdose death rates in the U.S. have been rising in the last 2 decades. In 2021, a record high of 106,700 preventable overdose deaths were recorded and in 2022 an estimated 79,000 people died. In 2022, a staggering 47% of all opioid-related overdose deaths were between the ages of 25-44, and 43% were between ages 45-64. The numbers continue to increase annually. The mission of the National Philoptochos Educational Initiatives Opioid Subcommittee is to increase awareness of this crisis existing in our parishes through educational initiatives faith-based guidance, and to provide valuable information and resources.

The first objective of the Opioid Subcommittee is to gather information from our parish priests to understand their experience with parishioners who have struggled with opioid addiction or have been involved with someone who has dealt with this illness. In pursuit of this objective, the committee has developed a brief, six-question online **Opioid Crisis Survey** designed to gauge the extent of the opioid problem within our parishes. The survey does not ask for personal information and consists of questions that are generic in nature. With the assistance of the Presidents from the eight Metropolises and the DAD, we are requesting the Chapter Presidents to consult with their parish clergy to complete the survey. As a tool to facilitate the discussions between the Chapter Presidents and their respective clergy, the committee has also developed a “Talking Points” document that contains useful facts and data about the opioid crisis. It is our expectation that the data collection process will be completed before the end of the year.

With the information collected through the survey, one of our goals is to develop a set of resource materials for use by our parishes, including information about referrals to treatment centers in their respective areas.

### **Children’s Mental Health:**

In 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics declared a national emergency in children’s mental health and the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory on the urgent need to address the mental health crisis in children and teens across the country. At the same time the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) surveyed more than 7,000 teens and reported that 4 out of 10 felt “persistently sad or hopeless,” while 1 in 5 had contemplated suicide. This issue is both comprehensive and complex, and it is the second focus of the Educational Initiatives Committee. It will be the challenge of the Children’s Mental Health subcommittee to increase awareness by exploring questions such as:

- *What common types of mental health disorders affect children and adolescents?*
- *Why are youth mental health disorders on the rise?*
- *What are the risk factors for children’s mental health?*
- *What are the contributing factors that impact children’s mental health?*
- *What are common signs/symptoms of mental health illness in youth?*
- *How do societal factors impact children’s mental health?*

The Opioid Crisis and Children’s Mental Health initiatives share a similar gravity; therefore, it is critical that our church community supports children, adolescents, and their families. It is our goal to bring awareness to these issues, provide relevant education, and offer the necessary resources to support those affected and their families.

Respectfully submitted,

Savina Prokopios-Davos and Despina Denne  
Co-chairs