

GREEK ORTHODOX LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY, INC.
NATIONAL COMMITTEE REPORT
MAY 23, 2023



Educational Initiatives Committee

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In recent years, the three-part purpose of the Educational Initiatives Committee has been to shed light and bring awareness to the following areas: the *Opioid Crisis*, *Women's Health*, and *Children's Mental Health*. These three areas are timely, relevant, and equally worthy of our attention. However, due to the increasing magnitude of the opioid crisis in our nation, this will continue to be the primary focus of this committee. As mental illness and the demand for psychological services are at an all-time high, especially in our children, the committee has collectively determined that Children's Mental Health will be our second focus.

The Opioid Crisis:

Opioid addiction is a progressively worsening epidemic and national crisis. It is estimated that three million Americans have had or currently suffer from opioid use disorder (OUD). More than 80,000 people in the U.S. died from opioid overdose in 2021 and the numbers continue to increase annually. The mission of the 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, we have designed a one-page questionnaire to gauge the extent of the opioid problem within our parishes to determine the types of resources needed. We will work towards eliminating the shame and stigma associated with OUD, continue to encourage church engagement with prayer and love, and 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 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.