



SAFE Station: Participant Interviews

**Presented to The Franklin County Office of Justice Policy and Programs
and
The Whitehall Division of Fire**

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**Whitehall SAFE Station
Semi-Structured Interview Plan and Questions
Presented by Mighty Crow**

Overview: The priorities for collecting interview data from persons who have engaged with the SAFE Station team and received linkage to treatment services are as follows:

- (1) Gain a better understanding of the experience with SAFE Station.
- (2) Gain a better understanding of the barriers to entering treatment that were helped by SAFE Station.
- (3) Gain a better understanding of the factors that facilitate entry to the SAFE station.

This type of program evaluation is considered descriptive research, aiming to provide a detailed description of the core program features and the individuals served. Qualitative data add context to the quantitative data collected and provide stakeholders with the lived experience of program participants.

The evaluation team will interview persons who utilized the SAFE station, gained access to treatment, and are willing to provide their feedback.

Methodology: The evaluation team conducted interviews that followed a semi-structured protocol. A semi-structured protocol means that a standard set of questions are asked, with some flexibility built in to ask additional questions that may help clarify or add additional context. The setting for the interviews was private offices at the Whitehall Division of Fire, the location of SAFE Station. All interviewees completed an informed consent prior to starting the interview and all efforts were made to protect interviewees' confidentiality. These interviews occurred on one day, February 13, 2020. The team from Mighty Crow interviewed a total of four persons. Dr. Gretchen Clark Hammond and Scott Boyd, LSW conducted the interviews.

Interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Data Collection and Analysis: Interviews were not recorded; rather, the evaluation team took notes by hand and then compiled those notes for coding and analysis. Interview data will supplement SAFE Station demographic and outcome data that has already been collected.

The next page contains an example of the consent form signed by participants. Copies of the consent forms are retained securely at the Mighty Crow office.

Consent for Participation in the Whitehall SAFE Station Program Evaluation

In partnership with the Whitehall Division of Fire and the Franklin County Office of Justice Policy and Programs, we, Mighty Crow Media, LLC are conducting research to evaluate the effectiveness of the SAFE Station program in linking community members to substance abuse treatment and related supports.

Purpose: We are interested in conducting interviews with individuals who received services and supports from the SAFE station team, to better understand the experience of interacting with the program, and how individuals define personal success or progress in substance use recovery, as well as the barriers and facilitators affecting individuals’ decision to enter and/or stay in substance use treatment.

What to expect: Interviews will last approximately 15 to 20 minutes. We will pose a series of questions to the group and we will ask that you contribute by providing your experience, opinions, and insights about working with the SAFE team. Taking part in this evaluation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to take part in the evaluation, it will not affect your current or future relationship with SAFE station.

Risks and benefits: There are no anticipated risks associated with this evaluation. However, there are several expected benefits. First, the results of this evaluation will help the SAFE team learn about the perceived implementation and value of its work, from your perspective. In addition, the results will be used to help prioritize future goals, action strategies, and resource allocations to meet the SAFE’s overall mission.

Confidentiality: With your permission, notes about answers to interview questions will be documented, but the interview/focus group will not be recorded. All potentially identifying information (e.g. names of people and places) will be removed from the notes gathered and notes will refer to participants as an “individual in the focus group” or “Interviewee 1.” No identifying information or comments made in this interview/focus group will be linked back to you personally. While we ask other group participants to keep the discussion in the group confidential, we cannot guarantee this. Please keep this in mind when choosing what to share in the group setting.

There may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law.

Incentive: There are no monetary incentives for participation. You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By consenting you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

Questions: If you have questions: The Project Evaluators is Dr. Gretchen Clark Hammond who can be reached via email at Gretchen@mightycrow.com

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the evaluation.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Interview Protocol and Findings

Four participants were interviewed on February 13, 2020. Table One provides a summary of the demographics of the four participants.

Table One: Demographics				
Participant	1	2	3	4
Gender	Female	Male	Male	Male
Race/Ethnicity	White	White	White	Multiple Races
Age (at the time of the interview)	43	27	40	28

1. How did you hear about SAFE station? *This question included a list of options from which to choose.*

- a. On TV: **(1)**
- b. At a local event
- c. Family or friend told me **(4)**
- d. A police officer or firefighter told me
- e. Other: (Please detail):

Findings: Everyone said they had a family member tell them about it. Another heard through word of mouth by a friend who had gone through the station before. One person was brought in after a family intervention was performed. When this individual was calling around for help a treatment provider told them about SAFE. One participant said they had also heard of SAFE station from television. One of the participants who had heard of safe through a friend flew to Ohio from California specifically to access the SAFE station. After his plane landed, he came directly to the SAFE Station.

2. What were your expectations for what the SAFE station could do for you? *This question included a list of options from which to choose.*

- a. SAFE would help me get into treatment quickly **(2)**
- b. SAFE would help me get medical care
- c. I was not entirely sure **(2)**
- d. I had no expectations

Two individuals indicated not being entirely sure of what to expect, while the other two individuals expected that SAFE would help them enter treatment quickly. One person, figured that because SAFE was part of a fire house figured, "Because they were in the business of saving lives, that they would help me."

3. Prior to entering SAFE station, how many times had you attempted to enter treatment or how many times had you entered treatment in the past year? *This question included a list of options from which to choose.*

- a. No times **(1)**
- b. 1 to 3 times **(3)**
- c. More than five times

One person said SAFE was their first attempt at getting into treatment. All others said they had tried one to three times.

4. What made the SAFE station experience different from trying to access treatment on your own?

Trying to access treatment was described as a difficult experience for each individual. The difficulties varied for each person.

- One person said they were homeless and on the street for a lengthy period. In the past they had used their mental illness to get into treatment. They did not have to do that to gain access thanks to SAFE station.
- One person was able to come in on his or her own and access treatment within an hour because of the SAFE station process.
- One participant said the easy access provided by SAFE station reduced the hurdles they had previously encountered. Waiting for access to treatment in the past had caused them to give up trying. SAFE station was a short cut, a fast lane, to treatment. One individual came directly from California to access SAFE. He had attempted to access treatment in California and was faced with high costs (e.g. \$26,000) or long wait times.

The assistance of EMS was also of note. One participant stated, “Having the Assistant Fire Chief walk me in was like having the president help me.”

5. How valuable was it that SAFE station transported you directly to treatment? *This question included a list of options from which to choose.*

- a. Not valuable
- b. Somewhat valuable
- c. Very valuable **(4)**

All four participants found the direct transport from SAFE station to be very valuable for many reasons, including the reality that change is very frightening and that the addicted brain wants to run away from change. Being directly transported kept the participants focused on entering treatment.

- One participant indicated that it was during the drive that they had their last feeling of, “I can leave.” before arriving at MASC.
- One said they just talked on the ride and felt listened to by people who genuinely cared. Without the transportation one said they probably would not have gone to treatment.
- One participant said the fear of being arrested for a warrant is very real and that having the SAFE team walk them into treatment helped them feel less afraid.

6. How safe did you feel while you were at SAFE station? *This question included a list of options from which to choose.*

- a. Not safe
- b. Somewhat safe
- c. Very safe **(4)**

Everyone described feeling “very safe.” They felt comfortable, that they were not judged, and not embarrassed to walk in. One person said they did have a panic attack in the parking lot of MASC but felt better once they got inside. Another said, “It goes back to my childhood and firefighters. I always felt I could fall back on them.”

7. How efficient was the process used by SAFE station to help you get into treatment? *This question included a list of options from which to choose.*

- a. Not efficient
- b. Somewhat efficient
- c. Very efficient **(4)**

All four participants described the process as “very efficient.” The ride to treatment was quick, and they were able to access treatment upon arrival. When the individual arrived from California MASC did not have an opening at

that time of the night, but SAFE was able to access treatment for him the following morning. All participants would like more locations of SAFE Station to exist throughout the county.

8. What things may have enhanced your experience with SAFE station or perhaps made the experience better?

All participants indicated that both Assistant Chief Menapace and Community Paramedic Jones were genuine in their desire to help. The SAFE personnel were more personable, "They're doing service work. They are taking it upon themselves to make a difference." The experience was described as, "The help I needed." Another said "Nothing" needed enhanced and that their family member has brought another person in from out of town. One person described seeing a tunnel with a light at the end and when they arrived that light was Chief Menapace. This person thought it was important to give closure to the firefighters at SAFE, to let them know, their work has changed lives.

This sense of warmth and compassion was not felt at the treatment center. People at treatment centers were described as cold. The experience at the center was not described in the same manner as the experience with SAFE.

9. What have you told others who are still struggling with addiction about coming to SAFE station?

Participants said that they would tell others the following about SAFE station:

- It is a SAFE place, and you don't have to worry if you have a warrant.
- You can invest in your life by coming to SAFE station.
- The process is not difficult.

10. If someone was "on the fence" about getting help through SAFE stations, what would you say to them?

Individuals said they would tell others to just go and to trust the process. They point out that there are no police at SAFE station to run warrants and that is normally a deterrent. They said change is not always bad. One would ask the question, "Do you want to do the same thing you did yesterday?"

11. SAFE Stations is partially funded by grants, do you think the funder should continue to support the program?

All four participants would absolutely support continuing the funding. One person said that everyone benefits from programs like this, stating, "the more we can put into this crisis (more money, funding, etc.) the better our homes will be and our cities will look".

Treatment Questions: Participants were asked some questions about their linkage to treatment.

12. Where did SAFE station take you to for treatment?

Maryhaven Addiction Stabilization Center (MASC): 3; Columbus Springs: 1

13. How long were you in treatment at this facility? This question included a list of options from which to choose.

- a. Less than 3 days
- b. 4 to 7 days (1)
- c. More than 7 days (3)

14. Did this facility refer you to ongoing treatment or to another level of care? (4) Yes _____ No

All four individuals were referred to ongoing treatment or another level of care. One person transferred to Maryhaven's Main Campus at Alum Creek, another transferred to House of Hope.

15. Did you follow up on that referral? (4) Yes _____ No (If no, please explain what led you to not follow up on the referral).

All four individuals followed up on the referral they were provided.

Recovery-Focused Questions:

16. Do you consider yourself as a person in recovery? (4) Yes ___No

Everyone interviewed considered himself or herself as a person in recovery.

17. How long have you been sober?

Length of Sobriety ranged from:

- 69 days
- 4 months
- 8 months
- 1 year and 47 days

18. What has changed in your life since getting sober?

All participants said a lot has changed in their lives since getting sober. They are building healthy relationships, working out, getting active, learning more about themselves, and becoming better people every day. Attitudes have changed and they have peace of mind. This is the longest some of them have been sober. They have jobs, at least one has been baptized, and they are saving money.

19. What types of recovery supports do you utilize?

- a. AA/NA/12-Step Meetings **(4)**
- b. Sponsor **(3)**
- c. Peer Support **(3)**
- d. Faith Community **(3)**
- e. Other: Intensive Outpatient Treatment **(1)**

All those interviewed have used AA and one used NA. One had a sponsor and the others three did not. Three participants use a peer support person. Three participants said they were involved in a faith community of some sort. One person is involved in an intensive outpatient group at this time. All four participants were living in recovery housing at the time of the interview.

Summary:

Four participants consented to an interview with the team from Mighty Crow. All four participants indicated that Safe Station had been instrumental in gaining access to care. They all commented on the quality of their care through SAFE Station, including being treated with compassion, dignity, and respect. Had SAFE Station not transported them to treatment and walked with them through the doors to the admission desk, at least two participants believed they would not have followed through. The participants were in agreement that there should be more than one SAFE station in Franklin County so that more people can access help immediately.

At the time of the interviews, all four participants were engaged in recovery support activities and identified as persons in recovery. The utilization of recovery housing and 12-step support were significant in the lives of the four participants. Their gratitude for the SAFE Station and this type of intervention was obvious as they shared their personal experience with the interview team.