



Opioid Addiction Treatment Services to Expand

Mental Health Tax Levy Provides Increased Funding, Access to Services

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GRANITE CITY, ILL. – Residents of St. Clair County will have greater access to the gold standard in opioid addiction treatment thanks to a partnership between the St. Clair County Mental Health Board and Chestnut Health Systems (Chestnut).

The Board has awarded a \$175,000 contract to Chestnut, effective July 1, 2018, that will expand Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT). The funding means expanded treatment capacity, the opportunity to leverage federal and state dollars, and access for residents to medically monitored substance use disorder treatment services.

Overcoming Barriers

The grant funding will reduce some of the common challenges to receiving quality treatment. "Giving medication to assist a patient's recovery from opioid use disorder is considered the optimum in care, but it's often an uphill battle to find a provider credentialed to prescribe the medication, access the services in a timely manner, and find reliable transportation to and from appointments," said Brent Cummins, Director of Adult Substance Use Services at Chestnut. "This generous funding will allow us to address each of those barriers. The local tax dollars will enable us to hire an additional healthcare provider to prescribe medication and to hire a driver to transport patients for services – neither of which is covered by other funding sources," he said. The funding will enable Chestnut to offer treatment to St. Clair County residents an additional 3 days per week beginning on or about October 1, 2018. The program expansion will help Chestnut to meet its strategic goal to expand MAT services in southern Illinois.

The MAT program is supplemented by state grant money that provides for counseling and case management, also important components of the treatment and recovery process.

Funding Source

Annually, the St. Clair County Mental Health Board allocates nearly \$2.2 million to a variety of local agencies. These new resources are possible following the Board's decision to increase the 2018 mental health tax levy; the new rate resulted in an increase of \$300,000 in funding for behavioral health services in St. Clair County. The increase was specifically earmarked to address the growing opioid epidemic. "Twenty-five people in St. Clair County have died of drug overdoses so far in 2018. Sadly, the county is on pace for more overdose deaths this year than last year. Now is the time to increase resources to combat this community wide problem," said Mark Kern, St. Clair County Board chairman.

The Board is also working with Chestnut, the State's Attorney's office, and others on the establishment of the St. Clair County Drug Prevention Alliance to further address drug addiction in the community.

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About Opioids

Opioids are a class of drugs that includes heroin, prescription pain relievers such as oxycodone and hydrocodone, and dangerous synthetic opioids such as fentanyl and carfentanil. Opioids work in the brain to reduce pain and can also produce feelings of relaxation and euphoria.

While prescription opioids are important medications that can relieve acute or chronic pain, they can also be prescribed inappropriately and misused.

Taking high doses of opioids for extended periods of time increases the risk of developing opioid use disorder, marked by physical tolerance of the drugs, inability to stop using opioids consistently, and painful physical withdrawal symptoms when abruptly stopping use. High doses can be fatal.

In 2016, opioid overdoses killed 1,946 people in Illinois, an 82 percent increase compared to 2013.

Chestnut Health Systems is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization that has provided a broad array of behavioral health care services to residents in Central and Southern Illinois for more than four decades. Known throughout the state as a leading provider of substance use treatment and prevention, Chestnut also provides mental health counseling, primary health care, housing, credit counseling, and substance use related research, training, and publications. www.chestnut.org

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