

Dane County Exec. Parisi: Dane County creates national model for helping people with opiate addiction

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Safe Communities Pilot Program had 90% Success Rate, Program Now Launching Countywide

Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi and Safe Communities announced an expansion of a successful pilot program to help people who struggle with opiate addiction. Dane County will be a national model for Opioid treatment after this expansion due to the 90 percent success rate of the pilot program. The County is working with Safe Communities to increase the referral network of recovery coaches for anyone that is struggling with an opioid addiction. In addition to all area hospital emergency departments, the Dane County Jail, and to pregnant women, this summer recovery coaches will be offered through Dane County police departments and EMS agencies. Area police and EMS agencies will distribute recovery coach contact information to community members struggling with opioid addiction. This is the most robust recovery coach program in the country.

“This expansion will increase the availability and opportunities for treatment,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. “We want an all hands on deck approach to addressing this opioid crisis. This has affected more of our neighbors and community members. Alcohol and Drug Treatment programs are available through the County but alone will not solve the problem. We must be sure to take full

advantage of opportunities to guide those burdened by addiction to the help they need.”

The program was modeled after a successful program in Rhode Island, where experts in treatment intervene with overdose patients in emergency rooms, shortly after their medical conditions are stabilized. County Executive Parisi included \$15,000 in his 2017 budget to match dollars from the Wisconsin Medical Society Foundation to pilot the program. The pilot started in the Emergency Department at SSM Health St. Mary’s November 1, 2017. In coming weeks, programs will launch at Unity Point Health Meriter and Stoughton Hospital EDs, which means all area emergency departments will offer recovery coaching services. UW Hospital and American Center Emergency Departments, and St. Mary’s Hospital and SSM Health – Sun Prairie Emergency Departments have programs underway.

“This epidemic has caused so much pain in our community,” said Skye Tikkanen from Safe Communities. “Safe Communities along with our partners: Dane County, our local health care organizations, and first responders is happy to alleviate some of that pain through this evidence-based intervention. This brings us one step closer to being able to support every Dane County resident that struggles with a substance use disorder at the time, and in the way they want.”

Coaches can be referred to any emergency department patient that presents as having opioid use disorder, not just those treated for overdose. For instance, if an individual is admitted due to complications with a pregnancy, or is suicidal, and emergency department medical staff identify opioid use as an issue, patients can be referred to recovery coaches. Patients admitted to a medical floor from the emergency department for another condition and who have an underlying opioid use disorder can be matched with a recovery coach. In 2017, the program reached 43 participants with an average of 90% having a confirmed intake at treatment.

In addition to emergency rooms, Safe Communities is partnering with Journey Mental Health to connect recovery coaches with inmates scheduled to be released from jail who opted to participate in the vivitrol program. Recovery coaches have attended orientations, received required clearances from the jail, and began attending Journey’s vivitrol patient groups in the jail. Five recovery coaches have been trained and assigned to the program, all of whom are in long term recovery and served time in jail for drug related offenses. This program began connecting coaches to people being released from jail in May.

The program will also help pregnant women who are struggling with addiction. Three recovery coaches are assigned to the program, all of whom are in long term recovery and used substances while pregnant. The pregnancy coach program began at SSM Health in February 2018.

Recovery Coaches are state-certified and have training on motivational interviewing, basic counseling techniques, and appropriate self-disclosure. Coaches are people in recovery who have had the same experiences as the patients that they will serve.

In addition to this program, Dane County funds many other drug and alcohol related services and recently announced it will be filing a federal lawsuit against the pharmaceutical drug manufacturers and wholesale drug distributors for their role in causing and fueling the opioid epidemic in the Dane County community.

Dane County EMS agencies administered 701 doses of narcan in 2016 and this increased to 901 administrations in 2017. A total of 13 opioid involved deaths occurred in 2000, but that number skyrocketed to 85 in 2016. The rate of heroin involved deaths has more than tripled since 2000, from 3.0 per 100,000 people in 2000 to 10.1 per 100,000 people in 2016.

Overall, Dane County has allocated a significant amount of resources to help those struggling with opioid addiction. Approximately \$7.5 million made up Dane County's 2017 Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment budget. There was \$733,000 in grant revenue from the state and federal governments that specifically provided treatment to those using opiates and using drugs intravenously in Dane County's 2017 budget. Of the Dane County residents receiving county-funded treatment, 30 percent were seeking treatment for problems with using opiates.

In the County Executive's 2017 budget he allocated funding for a permanent opiates counselor position to assist with deferred prosecutions in the District Attorney's (DA's) Office due to an increase in cases. Dane County spends \$230,000 on this program. The additional staff doubled the program's capacity, keeping more people out of jail and getting help for the root causes of their addiction. The deferred prosecution program works with non-violent opiate addicts to help assess what help they need and get them that treatment. Participants comply with weekly drug testing, face to face meetings with their counselor, take part in programming for their challenges and work to rebuild their relationships. Since its inception in 2013, the program has helped 157 participants.

Dane County has also been operating a drug court since 1986 that provides prosecution and sentencing alternatives to the criminal justice system for persons with substance abuse problems. The court services Dane County residents who are referred on felony non-violent drug driven charges who are at medium or high risk to re-offend. Graduates of this year-long program can have charges reduced or dismissed and have periods of incarceration reduced or eliminated.