

ALERT TOP STORY

HEALING CAYUGA

Healing Cayuga: County secures \$1M grant for substance use treatment

Monika Salvage Special to The Citizen

Feb 28, 2023



The Cayuga County Community Mental Health Center at 146 North St., Auburn.
Kevin Rivoli, The Citizen

Monika Salvage Special to The Citizen

Cayuga County was one of 25 rural counties nationwide that received a federal grant award for its proposed Comprehensive Substance Use Diversion Program. The program strives to reduce overdose fatalities in Cayuga County by embedding peer support and other targeted services at specific points of contact for individuals with opioid and substance use disorders, and diverting them from justice involvement toward treatment and recovery. The grant funding was secured by the Cayuga County Community Mental Health Center and totals \$1,000,000 over three years, designed to support grant activities carried out by the applicant and local partner agencies.

Over the past three years, the Cayuga County Community Mental Health Center, with HEALing Communities funding through the National Institutes of Health, has led a countywide, multi-disciplinary team of community partners. Together, we addressed increasing opioid overdose

deaths by expanding overdose education and Narcan distribution, improving same-day access to medications for opioid use disorder, enhancing peer support services in strategic settings, and expanding local data surveillance. We have made great strides in these areas, which is illustrated by a **greater than 40% reduction in overdose deaths over the last two years**.

People are also reading...

- 1 **Cayuga County-area police blotter: Feb. 21, 2023**
 - 2 **Cayuga County-area police blotter: Feb. 24, 2023**
 - 3 **Former NFL star Chad Johnson says he saved money by living inside Cincinnati Bengals stadium for 2 years**
 - 4 **Chaos in Weedsport: Warriors come back, beat Tully in overtime in section quarterfinals**
-

Close collaboration with partner agencies has revealed additional challenges for people struggling with opioid and substance use disorders that could not be addressed by existing funding. That led the Cayuga County Community Mental Health Center to apply for funding through the U.S. Department of Justice and Bureau of Justice Assistance Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant and Substance Use Program. The awarded funds and our proposed program puts a priority on providing services for women and people of color who have been historically underserved and will address specific challenges for people in crisis, people entering the legal and/or child welfare system, and people who have been released from treatment and/or incarceration.

Adding peer support at Child Protective Services (CPS) and Foster Care divisions of the Cayuga County Department of Social Services

In 2020, 27% of CPS cases were related to substance use. In 2021, 32.6% of petitions to the family court listed substance use as the primary factor. While the fear of losing your child is extremely stressful, having your child taken from you is a traumatic experience. Addressing substance use and mental health issues at the same time is often overwhelming for affected parents. Caseworkers shared that individuals with substance use disorder often struggle to stay connected, remain in treatment and keep their meetings with counselors, and thus become non-compliant. Once a child is in foster care, the 15-month timeframe for reunification does not leave much time for individuals struggling with substance use disorder to initiate and complete treatment and regain a healthy and safe lifestyle, all the while worrying about their child (or children) being elsewhere. The fear of losing their child or children is also a compelling reason for women not to seek substance use disorder treatment. Adding peer advocate services to CPS and foster care would be very beneficial for helping clients navigate the system, build a trusting relationship, follow through with treatment and thereby increase the likelihood of reunification with their children. This targeted support would benefit predominantly women, a population that experienced a 5.3-fold proportionate increase in overdose fatalities locally from 2020 to 2021. We are partnering with Nick's Ride 4 Friends to integrate a female peer and anticipate that peer support during early CPS involvement would reduce the number of family court actions and child removals.

Peer support at arraignments and rapid linkage to treatment and intervention court

Cayuga County courts have been operating problem-solving courts for 19 years, including misdemeanor and felony treatment courts, a behavioral health court and an opioid intervention court, which opened in August 2022. An estimated 52.8% of participants in Auburn/Cayuga County misdemeanor and felony treatment courts have a history of opioid and/or synthetic drug use as a primary substance. Auburn Intervention Court is a pre-plea court program aimed at saving lives through immediate intervention, rapid clinical assessment and treatment engagement, linkage to evidence-based treatment, and intensive supervision for those at risk of overdose. In partnership with Nick's Ride 4 Friends and Confidential Help for Alcohol and Drugs, we plan to add peer support at CAP arraignments to ensure rapid linkage to clinical assessment and treatment initiation and diversion to AIC with ongoing intensive case management.

911 diversion of people in crisis to mental health and substance use professionals

Law enforcement agencies have experienced increased calls for mental health issues. The Auburn Police Department reported a 9% increase from 2020 to 2021. The number of calls that were referred to a Mobile Crisis Team increased by 32% during the same timeframe. Provider data showed that mobile crisis involvement led to emergency room diversion 80% of the time. Many of these calls were related to substance use. Law enforcement agencies still spend a considerable amount of their time responding to calls that may not require their involvement. In addition, law enforcement personnel may not be properly trained to deescalate a mental health or substance use situation. In partnership with the Cayuga County 911 Center, we are working on a diversion initiative for persons in crisis who call 911 to be immediately connected to mental health and substance use professionals to ensure the best care possible and maintain law enforcement availability for other calls of service.

Enhanced peer support post-release and/or post-treatment



Monika Salvage

Data shows that people with opioid use disorder who are released from incarceration and/or treatment are at high risk for recurrence, overdose and death. We plan for enhanced peer support post-release and/or post-treatment to ensure continued recovery support during this crucial time, improve treatment retention and assist with securing a job or job training and safe housing options to support reintegration and reduce triggers that lead back to justice involvement or recurrence. Peers will assist with removing barriers to employment and housing. Grant funding will be used to assist with rapid rehousing, such as providing security deposits, first/last month's rent and move-in assistance, all of which can be serious barriers to securing stable housing.

Rural outreach to provide Narcan to law enforcement and first responders

The city of Auburn police, fire and ambulance, and the Cayuga County Sheriff's Office, have access to and administer Narcan in overdose emergencies. A survey among rural law enforcement and first responder agencies revealed that a majority of them do not carry Narcan. Local data shows that someone is more likely to die from an overdose if it happens outside of Auburn, which illustrates the importance of increasing Narcan access in rural areas. The Cayuga County Community Mental Health Center is a state-registered Opioid Overdose Prevention Program and has distributed over 3,000 Narcan kits in three years. We have started targeted outreach to rural areas to educate and train law enforcement and first responders and provide Narcan to them. This rural outreach also includes public education and access to Narcan by placing wall-mounted boxes in affected towns and villages to reduce stigma around addiction and enhance public safety and first aid response during overdose emergencies.

Monika Salvage works for the Cayuga County Mental Health Department as the project director for HEALing Cayuga and coordinates the countywide substance use response to reduce overdose deaths through the implementation of evidence-based practices. If you are interested in learning more, please call (315) 253-1522 or email msalvage@cayugacounty.us.