

Seneca County joins effort to get state funds for jail inmate substance abuse treatment

By DAVID L. SHAW / Feb 22, 2018

WATERLOO — As of Wednesday, 104 people were incarcerated in the Seneca County Correctional Facility in Romulus.

County mental health and jail officials said 75 to 90 percent of them have mild, moderate or severe substance abuse and addiction problems. In many cases, their addiction was the underlying cause of their arrests.

Seneca County has paid for Tania Doverspike, a full-time substance use disorder counselor, to serve the jail population since 2015. She and a full-time mental health counselor are fully paid by county taxpayers in the sheriff's department budget for 2018 to the tune of \$125,000.

"Alcohol is the top addiction issue for these inmates, with opioids a close second and rising quickly," said Margaret Morse, Seneca County's director of community services.

She said marijuana and stimulants such as cocaine and methamphetamine are other substances that Doverspike deals with.

About half of the state's 57 counties outside New York City also have hired substance abuse counselors for their jails; the other half offer no counseling. As the opioid crisis worsens, they are now looking for help from the state.

The New York State Conference of Local Mental Hygiene Directors, the New York State Sheriff's Association and the state Association of Counties have joined forces in a campaign to request \$12.8 million in the 2018-19 state budget for jail substance abuse treatment and post-release transition services.

Their proposal calls for \$156,000 going to each of the 41 counties with small jails and an additional \$400,000 going to each of the 16 counties with large jails, outside of New York City.

A cost-benefit analysis indicates that investing in in-jail treatment and transition services will result in a projected taxpayer savings of \$2,836 for each person served.

Morse said she and community service directors from Wayne and Ontario counties and the sheriffs of Seneca, Ontario and Wayne counties will meet with State Sen. Pam Helming, R-54 of Canandaigua, on March 1 to seek her help in advocating for the state budget funding.

"Counties all across the state are looking to the state for help in dealing with both in-jail treatment, where people no longer have access to the substances that they abuse, and for follow-up treatment after they are released to be sure they get services," Morse said.

She said prior to the county implementing a substance use disorder and mental health treatment service in the jail, the rate of repeat offenses averaged 49.6 percent. She said those with addictions who did not get proper follow-up care after their release often became repeat offenders and end up back in jail.

But once those services were made available, the recidivism rate has dropped to 26.9 percent. Morse said between 10 and 20 county residents have died from opioid overdoses since 2013. There also were 25.6 hospitalizations from opioid overdoses from 2012 to 2014, compared to the state average of 16.9, excluding New York City.

"We need to appeal to our state legislators for help because of the vital importance of these services.

The significant savings to the county as well as the benefits to the communities from a social perspective also are important," Morse said.

In-jail treatment and transition services are essential for successful integration back into communities,” she added.

She said being able to provide treatment to people when they are clean and sober in the jail setting provides a “unique opportunity” to assist and support people on the road to recovery.

The county mental health and addictions clinics have taken other steps, such as:

- Open access and walk-in hours every weekday at the addictions clinic.
- Expansion of services to include outpatient withdrawal assistance.
- Expansion of service hours to include Saturdays.
- Expansion of group services to include alternative approaches to recovery.
- Expansion of services to include peer services.
- The addition of full-time nursing services in the addictions clinic.
- Access to psychiatry services on-site one day a week.
- Deployment of staff off-site to serve in the community, not just the clinic.
- Prevention services in all four county school districts.
- Increasing the number of people trained to administer Narcan, a drug that reverses the effect of opioids, including giving Narcan to addicts upon their release and training them in its use.

Source: http://www.fltimes.com/news/seneca-county-joins-effort-to-get-state-funds-for-jail/article_ad9f4c97-9843-575c-9a6b-7186ec11c242.html