

For immediate release:

Jan. 7, 2021

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New opioid treatment programs highlight ‘forgotten epidemic’

Community Medical Services Clinic Expanding Access to Treatment in Wisconsin, Arizona

Phoenix, Ariz. and Milwaukee, Wisc. – Community Medical Services (CMS) is pleased to announce the opening of two new Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) in the states of Wisconsin and Arizona, [as new CDC data recorded 81,230 fatal drug deaths in a 12-month period through May 2020, a new record¹](#).

In Phoenix, the CMS facility will open its doors 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, and provide all 3 FDA-approved medications for opioid addiction treatment. CMS is the first OTP agency in the country to open 24/7 Opioid Treatment on Demand centers (OTOD).

“There is a consensus in the healthcare space that we have lost significant ground in the fight against the opioid crisis as any healthcare system is not equipped to fight two wars on two separate fronts,” CMS CEO Nick Stavros said. “Now, more importantly than ever before, we must step up the fight against the drug epidemic that has ravaged our country for decades. And that means expanding access to treatment to those who are suffering from addictions to opioids and other illicit substances.”

The Phoenix clinic will operate a full-time staff of nurses, medical providers, and counselors around the clock. The clinic will also conduct outreach to local hospitals, harm reduction agencies, justice system and correctional health entities, and crisis system partners to help navigate people into treatment.

“We understand that when those suffering from an opioid use disorder make the decision to seek treatment, time is of the essence,” Stavros said. “They might change their mind within a matter of hours, so it is absolutely imperative that we give them access to treatment at any given time. We are proud to participate in this opportunity to give new treatment options to people who may badly need it.”

Easing the health care burden in Wisconsin and Arizona

CMS has stayed true to its mission of expanding access to care. The two newest locations in Phoenix, AZ and South Milwaukee, WI brings CMS’ total number of clinics to 44 and CMS is currently opening an additional five clinics throughout the country, with its 45th clinic slated to open in East Cleveland in the next few weeks.

Both facilities have been planned to address critical needs in the states’ health care systems.

According to government figures, every \$1 spent on Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) results in \$4-\$7 in societal savings due to decreased crime rates and justice system costs and up to \$12 in societal costs when health care costs are included in the equation².

¹ <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/whats-behind-the-historic-spike-in-drug-overdose-deaths-under-covid-19>

² <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/principles-drug-addiction-treatment-research-based-guide-third-edition/frequently-asked-questions/drug-addiction-treatment-worth-its-cost>

“Emergency Departments are expending high costs as a result of the lack of treatment options during off-peak hours,” CMS’ Director of Medical Operations Jenn Mason said. “This center will hopefully offset many of these costs to EDs and will ultimately help save the Wisconsin health care system from unnecessary expenditures.”

CMS also has closely collaborated with Arizona’s health care leadership to address the need for a centrally located 24-hour multi-approach facility.

“At our Phoenix location, no matter the time, no matter the day, we will be here to guide individuals through the process and remove reduce barriers to treatment,” Jesus Godinez, the clinic’s manager, said. “Every client will be afforded the same opportunities to address their opioid use, by using modalities best suited for the client. Medical providers, counselors, case managers, and peer support specialists will work one-on-one with clients to ensure that their individualized treatments needs are met. As we continue to break through the stigma of addiction, we offer a safe place for anyone looking to start their recovery journey with us; in recovery there is hope, and hope is a wonderful thing.”

The Phoenix center opened on Jan. 4, 2021 and is located at 2806 West Cactus Road. The clinic in South Milwaukee, which opened its doors on Oct. 19, 2020 will be open from 5-12pm and will be located at 1333 College Ave Suite M1.

Forgotten Epidemic

CDC data shows that more than 450,000 Americans died from an opioid overdose between 1999-2018 and recently released data shows that the epidemic began to spike in 2019³. Additionally, data from the American Medical Association suggests that the opioid epidemic has been substantially exacerbated by COVID-19⁴.

“The last few months have been disheartening as our country has been struggling to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic which to date, has killed more than 228 thousand Americans,” Dr. Robert Sherrick, Chief Medical Officer for CMS, said. “However, we must not forget the co-occurring opioid epidemic which has ravished our country and doesn’t seem to have an end in sight.”

More information

OTPs provide MAT in the forms of methadone, buprenorphine (Suboxone/Subutex), and Vivitrol, in conjunction with psycho-social counseling and medical support for individuals diagnosed with opioid use disorder (OUD).

SAMHSA⁵, along with the Centers for Disease Control⁶ and numerous other medical and behavioral health agencies such as American Society of Addiction Medicine⁷ have said that opioid-agonist treatment (buprenorphine and methadone), is the gold standard of treatment for those suffering from OUD. Additionally, the World Health Organization and the US Department of Justice recommend methadone and buprenorphine as the standard of care for incarcerated individuals suffering from OUD⁸. Injectable Naltrexone, a newer medication being used in combating the epidemic, has shown promising

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html>

⁴ <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2020-10/issue-brief-increases-in-opioid-related-overdose.pdf>

⁵ <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA14-4443/SMA14-4443.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/pdf/2015-07-vitalsigns.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.asam.org/docs/default-source/public-policy-statements/1obot-treatment-7-04.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3372322/>

results in studies involving justice-system involved individuals as well. Research has shown that MAT, particularly methadone treatment, decreases overdose mortality risk by up to 75%⁹.

⁹ <https://www.asam.org/docs/default-source/advocacy/mat-talking-points-final.pdf?sfvrsn=0>