

Expanding access to medication-assisted treatment

Medication-assisted treatment (MAT) combines behavioral therapy and medications to treat substance use disorders, including opioids.

FDA has approved several different medications to treat opioid addiction and alcohol dependence. A common misconception associated with MAT is that it substitutes one drug for another. Instead, these medications relieve the withdrawal symptoms and psychological cravings that cause chemical imbalances in the body. MAT programs provide a safe and controlled level of medication to overcome the use of an abused opioid. Research has shown that when provided at the proper dose, medications used in MAT have no adverse effects on a person's intelligence, mental capability, physical functioning, or employability.

MAT grant

Minnesota has been awarded a \$6 million, 3-year federal grant for MAT. This grant is an important step to solving the opioid epidemic that has had a devastating effect on too many individuals, families and communities.

The funds will go to support efforts with the White Earth Nation, Red Lake Nation and Fairview Health Services. Two organizations were also funded to provide technical assistance and support.

The grant allows DHS to work to monitor the grants, make medication-assisted treatment more available and work to decrease disparities in Minnesota.

The grant to Minnesota comes from the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA). Nationally, CARA expands prevention and education efforts while also promoting treatment and recovery. CARA was signed into law in July 2016 and is the first major federal addiction legislation in 40 years and the most comprehensive effort undertaken to address the opioid epidemic.

Medications

Methadone, buprenorphine and naltrexone are used to treat opioid dependence and addiction to short-acting opioids such as heroin and morphine, as well as semi-synthetic opioids like oxycodone and hydrocodone. People may safely take medications used in MAT for months, years, several years, or even a lifetime.

About opioids

Of the over 50,000 (53,389) people who received treatment for substance use disorder last year, over 10,000 were there due to opioids. In 2016, there were 376 opioid-involved deaths in 2016, up 12 percent from 2015.

Prescribed opioids, such as oxycodone and hydrocodone, continued to account for the greatest number of opioid-involved deaths, 186 in 2016. There were 96 synthetic opioid-involved deaths in 2016, with 85 involving fentanyl – the drug believed responsible for Prince's death. Deaths involving synthetic opioids increased nearly 80 percent from 2015.