

NEWS RELEASE

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For more information, contact:
Jimmy Mount, (803) 896-5562

DAODAS Pilots New Medication-Assisted Treatment Court Concept in York County

COLUMBIA, S.C. – The S.C. Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services today announced the creation of the South Carolina Medication-Assisted Treatment Court (MATC), a three-year project in York County that will provide evidence-based treatment to defendants with drug dependency from the point of arrest.

The MATC will assist defendants charged with drug offenses, who normally might have to wait in jail for up to six months before they appear before a judge on their charges, by providing behavioral and medication-assisted treatment, peer support services, transportation and housing between their arrest and the disposition of their cases.

The pilot project, which officially launched Feb. 1, will treat up to 30 defendants per year with the goal of expanding to other South Carolina counties. Funded through a \$900,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, the South Carolina MATC is a collaborative effort of DAODAS, the York County Solicitor's Office, York County Sheriff's Office, Keystone Substance Abuse Services, Rock Hill Treatment Specialists, Faces and Voices of Recovery (FAVOR) Piedmont and Oxford Houses of South Carolina. Winthrop University's Department of Social Work will conduct research and evaluation for the model program.

"Without the willingness and commitment of our partners in York County, this project would not have been possible," said DAODAS Director Sara Goldsby. "As Governor McMaster has repeatedly emphasized, we must combat the opioid crisis in the only way our state knows how: as one team collaborating and sharing talents and resources at the state and local levels."

York County Sheriff Kevin Tolson said he is eager to participate in any program that can successfully address the opioid epidemic. "This battle cannot be fought by enforcement measures alone, and this grant-funded program allows for an innovative, multi-faceted approach that will hopefully begin to address this ever-growing problem."

Training will be provided to personnel at the York County Detention Center on screening for appropriate defendants, and a designated prosecutor from the York County Solicitor's Office will assist with coordination.

The project's grant funding also provides housing scholarships for participants to stay in one of three Oxford Houses – residences where persons in recovery can live in a democratically run, self-supporting and drug-free home.

York County experienced a 75% increase in opioid-related deaths from 2014 to 2016, from 24 to 42 deaths. Many of these deaths resulted from prescription medicines, with a growing number due to fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid that is often made illegally and mixed with heroin or cocaine.

York County EMS and law enforcement officials report that they administered the overdose-reversal drug naloxone to 168 individuals in 2016 and to 251 in 2017. Local hospitals and Keystone Substance

Abuse Services (the county alcohol and drug abuse authority) also report increasing numbers of drug-related overdoses and clients with an opioid diagnosis.

The South Carolina MATC will fulfill one of the directives of the General Assembly's Opioid Abuse Prevention and Treatment Plan – for DAODAS to establish a diversion program in at least one judicial circuit that provides both behavioral and medical treatment, consultations with peer support specialists, and continued supervision of participants who are released.

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DAODAS is the cabinet agency charged with ensuring the provision of quality services to prevent or reduce the negative consequences of substance use and addictions.