



BJA's
Comprehensive
Opioid, Stimulant,
and Substance Abuse
Program



North Carolina
Rutherford County
Rutherford County Jail MAT and Embedded Services

10/01/19 Grant Start → 09/30/22 Grant End

Overview

Rutherford County, a predominantly rural area in Western North Carolina, is marked by unemployment rates higher than state and national averages, substandard housing, and both generational and situational poverty. The area's economic shutdown in the late 1990s coincided with the dismantling of North Carolina's mental health system and a surge in prescription opioid use. Of the 100 counties in the state, Rutherford ranks sixth in the number of opioid prescriptions, averaging 107.8 pills per resident (compared to the statewide average of 78.3).

North Carolina's Strengthen Opioid Misuse Prevention (STOP) Act of 2017 affected the availability of and access to prescription opioids, resulting in a user shift to non-prescription and synthetic substances, such as heroin and fentanyl analogues, and an uptick in polydrug use. Many in the community who struggle with addiction use opioids in conjunction with benzodiazepines, methamphetamine, THC, cocaine, and alcohol. The pervasiveness of polydrug use in the community is evidenced by data collected from the Department of Social Services' (DSS)

drug testing of clients, which indicated a positive drug test rate of 61.3 percent. These aggregated data include positive tests of young children who have been exposed to substances in the home. As further evidence of substantial drug use, DSS earmarked a total budget of \$100,000 for drug testing for Fiscal Year 2018–2019, of which 133 percent was expended two months shy of the fiscal-year end.

Grant Focus

- Expand jail-based treatment and effective reentry programs.
- Expand peer support services and recovery housing.
- Link data sets to identify trends and focus resources.
- Expand models of public health, behavioral health, and public safety information sharing and collaboration at state and local levels.
- Support children and youth affected by the opioid epidemic.

- Build capacity in underserved regions impacted by the opioid epidemic.
- Expand public awareness about opioid abuse.
- Integrate standardized screening practices into the criminal justice system.

Program Approach

Rutherford County Jail Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) and Embedded Services brings together community partners in a collaborative effort to reduce opioid use and its detrimental effects on incarcerated individuals and families, particularly children who may be subjected to abuse or neglect. It expands the Rutherford County Detention Center's Jail MAT (JMAT) program for individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD) and provides a more robust continuum of recovery supports post-release.

This initiative embeds DSS staff at the Rutherford County Detention Center. Whereas the jail's medical team provides medical oversight and medication administration, DSS' Project Safe Harbor staff provide comprehensive assessment of and therapeutic services for substance use disorders (SUDs) during incarceration.

Key elements include:

- The Rutherford County Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office, and DSS work closely with local judges, probation, and other entities along the sequential intercepts to identify potential candidates for the program.
- Monthly injections of Vivitrol (naltrexone) and weekly substance abuse intensive outpatient therapy treatment begin during incarceration. Upon release from jail, participants continue treatment under supervision of probation.
- Project Safe Harbor supports adults with mental health issues and SUDs who have children currently being served by Rutherford County Child Protective Services. It emphasizes achieving goals indicated

in case plans, increasing self-efficacy, and improving quality of life. Assistance is facilitated through a 12-week curriculum that addresses life skills development, budgeting and managing finances, positive parenting skills, SUD education, and job seeking. It also provides referrals to community resource providers. Participants have access to a credentialed substance abuse professional.

- DSS provides JMAT services during incarceration only; post-release, clients are referred to the OUD Outpatient Treatment Program at Blue Ridge Community Health Services (BRCHS). BRCHS tracks individuals' employment status, social connectivity, housing needs, educational needs, and other needed services.
- Children receive DSS services in accordance with statutory guidelines spelled out by the state of North Carolina. DSS refers children to therapeutic services from local, credentialed, and licensed behavioral health care providers.

Project Partners

- Rutherford County Sheriff's Office
- Rutherford County Department of Social Services
- Blue Ridge Community Health Services
- Rutherford County District Attorney's Office
- North Carolina Department of Public Safety (Probation, Rutherford County)
- United Way of Rutherford County

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