

NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

Presented by Deputy Bureau Chief of Prisons Paul G. Shavack, Public Information Officer

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DOC to Expand Medication Assisted Treatment Program to Prison Facilities Statewide

Dover- The Delaware Department of Correction (DOC) announced today that it is expanding its Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program to Level V prison facilities statewide. MAT combines medication and behavioral therapy to treat individuals who are addicted to opioids such as heroin and prescription drugs that contain opiates and is a proven approach to sustaining recovery and combating the opioid crisis.

“A significant number of the individuals entering our prison system are addicted to opioids and we know that providing medication assisted treatment while incarcerated can help them achieve long-term recovery and improve their chance of success when they return to the community,” said Dr. Marc Richman, Chief of DOC’s Bureau of Correctional Healthcare Services. “Thanks to strong support from the General Assembly, Department of Health and Social Services and the Lt. Governor’s Behavioral Health Consortium which provided critical funding support DOC is able to expand our existing Medication Assisted Treatment program to meet the needs of offenders in all prison facilities.”

According to the Delaware Drug Overdose Fatality Review Commission Report (June 2019), which reviewed a representative sample of Delaware’s record 400 overdose deaths in 2018, 30% had previously been detained with the Delaware Department of Correction. Moreover, of those individuals reviewed who had been previously detained, half suffered a fatal overdose within three months of release and three-quarters died from an overdose within one year of release.

Clinical research nationally has led to a shift in treatment protocols from detoxification to the use of MAT for individuals who reside in the community and also for those detained in correctional facilities. DOC has responded by adopting this best-practice approach for its pre-trial detainees and sentenced offenders. All FDA-approved medications (e.g., Buprenorphine, Methadone, Naltrexone) for the treatment of Opioid Use Disorder will be employed in DOC’s MAT program.

The expansion of MAT to prison facilities statewide builds on its existing MAT programs for pregnant individuals in Baylor Women’s Correctional Institution and, since 2018, for offenders within DOC’s Level IV Community Corrections Centers. To-date, 800 individuals in DOC custody have received treatment through DOC’s existing MAT programs.

Recently the Pew Foundation recognized DOC’s initial opioid intervention efforts, including Medication Assisted Treatment, and recommended its expansion throughout prison facilities.

DOC's MAT expansion will begin at Sussex Correctional Institution and will expand to remaining prison facilities over the coming months. It will be available to individuals who were prescribed MAT treatment in the community before their incarceration as well as individuals whose medical evaluation while incarcerated recommends MAT treatment. DOC also has partnered with its healthcare provider to place specialized case managers within prison facilities to help ensure consistency and continuity of treatment after release and reentry into the community.

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