

Considerations for Implementing Medication-Assisted Treatment in Treatment Court Settings

SUPPORTING FACT SHEET

OCTOBER 2020

Stakeholder Considerations

- Ensure representation from cross-system stakeholders, including local politicians, judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, case managers, community corrections, peer specialists, housing advocates, physical medical providers, and treatment providers.
- Train court personnel on treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD).
- Consider the stigma associated with OUD.
- View OUD through a harm-reduction lens instead of an abstinence model.
- Break down silos; communication is imperative.
- Educate local physical healthcare providers (e.g., hospitals, federally qualified health centers, emergency medical technicians) on medication-assisted treatment (MAT).
- Secure buy-in from government representatives who make decisions about funding for court procedures:
 - Identify a champion in the judiciary (e.g., a judge who presides in treatment court) who can serve as a spokesperson to promote MAT.
 - Use informal conversations, such as “lunch-ins,” with judges to shed light on issues of interest.
 - Read this supplemental resource:
 - » [*Convening, Collaborating, Connecting: Courts as Leaders in the Crisis of Addiction*](#) | National Judicial Opioid Task Force

Client Considerations

- Educate treatment court clients on the benefits of MAT via the following methods:
 - Provide all necessary information and data sources.
 - Address barriers and reluctances to MAT.
 - Help clients recognize that medicine can improve the quality and duration of their life.
- Recognize that proper housing is essential for treatment.
 - Ensure that the environment is safe and sober to promote recovery and lower the chances of recidivism.
 - Educate everyone in the residential environment on recovery and MAT-related processes.
- Review the following supplemental resources:
 - [*Medication-Assisted Treatment \(MAT\) in the Criminal Justice System: Brief Guidance to the States*](#) | SAMHSA
 - [*Preventing Opioid Overdose at Reentry through Jail- and Community-based Programs*](#) webinar slides | SAMHSA's GAINS Center
 - [*Release to What? Behavioral Health-Based Strategies to Address COVID-19*](#) | Policy Research Associates, Inc.
 - [*Use of Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder in Criminal Justice Settings*](#) | SAMHSA

Treatment Court Structure

- Educate the treatment court team on OUD and relapse. The team should not use technical violations that result in jail time as the only form of addressing relapse.
- Monitor compliance and ensure clients are following up with providers. If a patient violates compliance and is sent to a facility, ensure that the facility has a MAT program.
- Include medication prescribers on the treatment court team. Having access to medication treatment on the team helps educate the treatment court team and removes barriers to the exchange of information between medical providers and the courts.
- Engage physicians who partner with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in Veterans treatment courts, where possible.
- Provide a comprehensive array of services.
- Understand that peer specialists are essential for promoting recovery and reducing relapse; clients want to communicate with people who have lived experience.

Highlights from the Field: Ottawa County, Michigan

Ottawa County Forum for Client and Stakeholder Information

- Lessons learned in the implementation of MAT in treatment court settings:
 - General lessons:
 - » Understand that a multi-disciplinary team should be transparent in the exchange of information.
 - » Cultivate and sustain long-term relationships.
 - » Provide access to cross-system training and learning.
 - Administrator lessons:
 - » Do not work too fast; ensure everyone is on board.
 - » Gain the perspectives of other disciplines.

About

SAMHSA's GAINS Center for Behavioral Health and Justice Transformation focuses on expanding access to services for people with mental and/or substance use disorders who come into contact with the justice system.

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