

Press Release

HEALing Communities Study Launches New Medication Treatment Retention Campaign to Reduce Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths

An estimated 2.1 million Americans have opioid use disorder (OUD)¹. In 2021, Cortland County had an all-time high in fatal overdoses with 17 deaths, 16 of which involved an opioid². Opioids remained a factor in over 80% of the 11 fatal overdoses in 2022, as well. Although there was a decrease in fatal overdoses from 2021 to 2022, there have already been at least five fatal overdoses in 2023. Three of the deaths have confirmed toxicology so far, and show opioid-involvement. Not to mention, there have been over 150 overdose incidents reported in the City of Cortland over the last 3 years that were suspected as opioid-related according to self-reporting³.

Opioid use disorder is a medical condition characterized by an inability to stop the use of an addictive substance, despite the negative consequences associated with its use. It's normal to use medications, sometimes for the rest of your life, to manage a chronic health condition. Recovery from OUD also requires more than willpower, and medications can be part of the solution. Three FDA approved medications – methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone – can lower the risk of relapse and overdose. Evidence shows that these medications reduce or eliminate withdrawal symptoms (methadone, buprenorphine), blunt or block effects of illicit opioids (methadone, naltrexone, buprenorphine), and reduce or eliminate cravings to use opioids (methadone, buprenorphine). MOUD treatment can be combined with psychotherapy, support groups, or other treatment opportunities where available. To reduce overdose deaths and the many other destructive effects of opioid use disorder on our community, we must

¹ Substance Abuse Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. Results from the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables. SAMHSA.
<https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DetTabs-2016/NSDUH-DetTabs-2016.htm>. Published September 7, 2017. Accessed March 7, 2018.

² Cortland County Coroner Report. Toxicology results from 2009-2022. 2023.

³ City of Cortland Police Department. Overdose reports. 2021, 2022, 2023.

increase the number of people who seek MOUD treatment and who stay in treatment long enough to recover.

However, challenges associated with availability and acceptance of medication treatment exist. They can make it harder for people to access the treatment they need or to stay in treatment for as long as they need.

To address these challenges, Healing Cortland (a project of CACTC) will launch a campaign **August 7 - October 6, 2023** focused on ***Staying in Medication Treatment***. This unique campaign aims to help people with OUD and needed supporters (e.g., loved ones, treatment providers):

- Understand how important medication treatment can be for recovery from OUD
- Recognize that everyone has a different treatment journey
- Learn how to overcome commonly experienced barriers to treatment retention
- Improve support for those in medication treatment

Throughout the campaign, real people share their compelling stories about how they have overcome challenges to staying in medication treatment. Treatment challenges addressed throughout the campaign include managing anxiety and depression, coping with cravings and triggers, finding recovery support that accepts medication treatment, and asking for support from loved ones.

Valerie Partridge, a community member who is in recovery, wants people to know that there are people and resources to help support the first steps of your recovery journey, "Early recovery can be scary. You will be flooded with feelings and emotions that had long been suppressed. Be open and honest with yourself and your loved ones and maintain a strong support system. Connecting with providers for MOUD helped me start my recovery path. Recovery is possible and it is worth it."

"This campaign offers a really exciting opportunity to connect with people through stories," says Aster Parrott, the Healing Cortland Community Engagement Coordinator. "Our previous campaigns have been very informational, very fact-oriented. But we need to recognize that it's a very personal and emotional experience to live with a substance use disorder and to start

treatment. I hope that these stories can convey some of the person-centered, emotional experience to help people listen to the messages: medication treatment is an evidence-based clinical standard of care shown to reduce risk of overdose and support patients' paths to recovery."

At the time of writing, we have the following agencies partnering to share campaign materials in some form: Access To Independence, Cayuga Addiction Recovery Services (CARS), Cortland County Community Action Program (CAPCO), Cortland County Health Department, Cortland County LGBTQ Center, Cortland Free Library, CNY AHEC, Family and Children's Counseling Services of Cortland County, Healing Hearts Collaborative, Southern Tier AIDS Program (STAP), Seven Valleys Health Coalition, and the TC3 Recovery Space.

You Can Help HEAL our Communities

Everyone can make a difference by staying in MOUD treatment for as long as you need and supporting our loved ones, friends, patients, and clients in MOUD treatment.

About the HEALing Communities Study

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimates that 2.1 million Americans have OUD, yet fewer than 20% of those individuals receive specialty care in a given year. A menu of evidence-based practices (EBPs) exists, including opioid overdose education and naloxone dissemination programs, prescription drug monitoring programs, FDA-approved medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD). Unfortunately, these EBPs have largely failed to penetrate community settings. As a result, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) launched the HEALing Communities Study (HCS) to investigate and identify the EBPs for preventing and treating OUD that are most effective at the local level. The goal of the study is to reduce opioid-related overdose deaths by 40 percent over the course of three years.

To learn more about the study or support the Campaign, please visit:

- Website: www.HEALTogetherNY.org/Cortland
- Facebook: facebook.com/healingcortland