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Front Page News

Friday, July 14th, 2023

OnTrack plans addiction treatment and health care for whole family in Medford

By Vickie Aldous of the Daily Courier

MEDFORD — Families that need addiction treatment, mental health care and physical health care could eventually get all those needs handled in one spot devoted to children and parents.

Addiction treatment provider OnTrack Rogue Valley is spearheading a project to turn the Cobblestone Village business complex on Riverside Avenue in Medford into the Cobblestone Family Treatment Campus.

When children are removed from their homes due to abuse and neglect, more than 75% of the cases involve alcohol and/or drug use in the home, according to OnTrack.

Child abuse and neglect are the biggest causes of drug and alcohol abuse in adulthood. Of people in residential addiction treatment, 80% have a family history of addiction, according to OnTrack, which has facilities in Jackson and Josephine counties.

"We're really trying to interrupt the intergenerational cycle and prevent this cycle from continuing," said Sommer Wolcott, executive director of OnTrack.

The project for families could be a nationwide model, while also helping to address a severe shortage of residential treatment locally, supporters said.

The National Drug Helpline ranked Oregon as the worst state for substance abuse this year, and the state consistently ranks among the worst for access to treatment.

This week, 280 people were waiting to get into OnTrack's 50 residential treatment program beds, according to Wolcott.

There's no wait for outpatient treatment programs, she said.

"When people are ready and they come in and get an assessment, and they get put on a wait list for residential treatment that's months and months long, it's really devastating to them to see how far down the wait list they are," Wolcott said.

OnTrack plans to move its 24-bed residential treatment program for moms with their kids to Cobblestone Village, along with its 10-bed program that keeps dads and their kids together during treatment.

The total number of beds for parents with kids will go up from 34 to 45-50, OnTrack anticipates.

OnTrack currently has a 16-bed program for adults without kids in tow.

With women and kids relocated out of the current 24-bed facility to Cobblestone Village, that building will open up to serve others who need residential treatment, OnTrack said.

The changes will add a total of 35-40 new residential treatment beds to the Rogue Valley, OnTrack said.

Wraparound services will be just as important as the increase in residential treatment beds, supporters said.

Trying to travel around the Rogue Valley to reach different addiction treatment, mental health and physical health appointments for the adults and kids in a family is overwhelming to parents in recovery, said Jay Wurscher of the Oregon Department of Human Services.

"This eliminates that. This allows that family to truly function as a family," he said.

Wurscher said families will have a better chance of succeeding and staying together, rather than having the kids put in foster care.



JULIE ANDERSON / Daily Courier From left, Oregon Department of Human Services chief operations officer Seth Lyon, MASS Design Group senior director of advancement Ashley Marsh, OnTrack executive director Sommer Wolcott, and Mahlum Architects principal architect Kim Olson talk about renovations to implement OnTrack's vision to repurpose the Cobblestone Village business complex in Medford into a one-stop campus for family addiction treatment, mental health care and physical health care.

Advertisement for David F. Young MD, PC DERMATOLOGY. Includes text: 'Welcome Drew Lakey, PA-C', 'Drew is a diplomate fellow with the Society of Dermatology Physician Assistants...', 'We specialize in treating diseases of the skin and medical dermatology.', and contact info: (541) 479-3367 • dryoungderm.com

Advertisement for Rogue Community College. Includes text: 'REGISTER NOW!', 'ROGUE COMMUNITY COLLEGE', 'FALL TERM BEGINS SEPT. 25', and a 'LEARN MORE >>' link.

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Help

With the variety of buildings and office spaces clustered together at Cobblestone Village, a client seeking addiction help could walk across an aisle to get mental health care, for example, Wurscher said.

Other services will include therapeutic childcare, peer support for families and outpatient mental health care and addiction treatment.

The Oasis Center of the Rogue Valley, which combines family health care with addiction treatment at a clinic near Hawthorne Park, is one of the partners with OnTrack on the Cobblestone Village project.

The Oasis Center plans to open a satellite clinic there.

Dr. Kerri Hecox, co-founder of the Oasis Center, said people struggling with addiction will be able to meet other patients further along on the path of recovery.

Patients who've been part of programs longer can serve as role models.

"Many of the families we see who are struggling with addiction are very socially isolated. They have very weak social supports," Hecox said.

She pointed to the example of two of her patients who bonded while attending the OnTrack treatment program for moms. One woman is helping the other learn how to drive so she can get her driver's license.

"The power of community is when you have a web of people who can support you. That's one of the things that excites me most about this opportunity," Hecox said.

Offering services in one place will also lessen provider burnout. Patients will have a much better chance of improving their lives and health if they can get to the different services they need, Hecox said.

Other partners on the project include Jackson Care Connect — a local manager of Oregon Health Plan benefits — and Mahlum Architects.

The nonprofit group MASS Design Group is providing consulting and design work for free.

OnTrack invested \$3.1 million to buy Cobblestone Village last year and has secured \$12.5 million in grants plus \$50,000 in private donations, according to Wolcott.

OnTrack will have an idea of the total cost for the Cobblestone Family Treatment Campus after more design work is done this summer and fall, she said.

Major construction to renovate the complex will likely start in late 2024 or early 2025, architects said.

Wolcott predicted OnTrack will need to launch a fundraising campaign.

Federal and state government reimbursement rates for residential addiction treatment have historically been too low for Oregon providers to build new beds.

More funding could come from the Oregon Health Authority, Wolcott said.

She anticipates OHA will put out a request for proposals to provide more treatment beds in the state.

Money from Oregon's legal settlements with companies that fueled the opioid painkiller addiction and overdose crisis may also help fund treatment, Wolcott said.

Oregon voters approved Measure 110 to decriminalize drugs like heroin, meth and fentanyl in 2020, plus fund addiction treatment using taxes on legal marijuana.

But the citizen oversight committee in charge of choosing how to spend \$300 million in Measure 110 money put funding into services like clean needles, overdose antidote kits, peer mentors and housing.

The committee didn't fund residential treatment or medically supervised detox on the theory that money for those services could come from other sources.

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