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Front Page News

Last Update Thursday, January 11th, 2024

Measure 110 falling short on addiction recovery, report says

By Vickie Aldous of the Daily Courier

Data from a new Oregon Health Authority report released Wednesday shows the largest group of people receiving Measure 110-funded services are getting harm reduction supplies like overdose antidote and clean needles, while only 5% of service providers reported success moving clients into recovery from addiction.

When describing what did help clients recover, many providers mentioned the role of residential addiction treatment — even though the citizens' oversight council that decides Measure 110 spending isn't funding residential treatment.

Oregon faces a major shortage of residential treatment beds and medically supervised detox facilities.

Neither was funded by the oversight council that divvied up \$265 million in legal marijuana taxes to pay for clean needles, overdose antidote kits, peer mentors, housing and other services.

In the OHA report, one provider told the story of a mother who couldn't stop using drugs. She stabilized and started thriving in a residential treatment program, and the provider helped her with needs like a car seat and supplies for her baby who she visits three times a week.

Another service provider described a client trying to get through the suffering of withdrawal on her own without help from a detox facility. The client struggled to stop using drugs, but was able to enter and successfully complete a residential treatment program. The provider then helped pay her rent for sober housing.

On Wednesday, OHA touted a nearly 300% gain in key services during the first full year of data reporting for Measure 110.

During the most recent quarter reported, 18,000 people got harm reduction supplies, compared to 8,000 people who received substance use disorder treatment, according to OHA data.

Addiction treatment can take place in outpatient settings or in residential facilities.

Data shows 9,000 people got screening and assessments, 14,000 got help from peer mentors, 3,000 received housing help, and 1,000 got employment assistance.

"With every passing day we're seeing Measure 110 funding become further integrated into our system of care," OHA Behavioral Health Director Ebony Clarke said in a statement. "It's important to sustain these investments at current levels so these providers can continue to provide these life-saving services and supports."

Oregon voters passed Measure 110 in November 2020, decriminalizing user amounts of drugs like fentanyl, heroin and methamphetamine starting in February 2021.

Funding to help people with addiction started rolling out in May 2022, according to an OHA timeline.

While Measure 110 was named the Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act, the oversight council that makes funding decisions described the mission as "services and support" for people who use drugs.

"There definitely are challenges with people's understanding of what they thought they were voting for and what was actually implemented," said Sommer Wolcott, executive director of OnTrack Rogue Valley.

The organization provides a range of services, including outpatient addiction treatment and residential addiction treatment in Jackson and Josephine counties.

OnTrack received Measure 110 funds for a variety of services, but not residential treatment.

Wolcott said the wait to get into residential treatment around the state can stretch for months.

As one example, OnTrack has a 170-person waiting list for a 16-bed residential treatment facility it runs in Josephine County. With average stays lasting 90 days, Wolcott said the wait to get in is typically nine to 10 months.

OnTrack often loses track of people before a bed opens up, and they fall off the waiting list. Otherwise, the list would be even longer, Wolcott said.

She said Measure 110 has proven extremely beneficial in providing services to wrap around people getting treatment.



Advertisement for Rogue Community College featuring two women in blue scrubs and text: 'LEARN MORE EARN MORE', 'ROGUE COMMUNITY COLLEGE', '50+ SHORT-TERM TRAINING PROGRAMS'.

Advertisement for Siskiyou Pediatric Clinic LLP featuring a logo with a sun and children, text: 'Siskiyou Pediatric Clinic LLP', 'New Patients Welcome! (541) 955-5683', 'Welcome Michelle Molck, CPNP-PC', 'Michelle was raised in Memphis, TN. She obtained her MSN from the University of South Alabama as a Pediatric Primary Care Nurse Practitioner. Michelle worked at a pediatric clinic for about 8.5 years.', '700 SW Ramsey Ave., Suite 204 Grants Pass, OR 97527', 'SiskiyouPediatricClinic.com', 'We are proud to have earned one of Oregon's highest rank as a Patient Centered Primary Care Home.', 'AllCare IPA Member'.

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It also helps organizations like Max's Mission — which provides overdose antidote kits — that traditionally haven't been able to get funding from government-provided health insurance like Medicaid, Wolcott said.

Medicaid does cover residential treatment and detox for some low-income people, but providers say reimbursement rates aren't high enough to build new facilities.

There's no doubt Measure 110 funding for overdose antidote is saving lives amid an overdose crisis that kills more than 100,000 Americans each year.

In 2023, first responders in Grants Pass alone responded to 137 overdoses through the end of September, with 14 proving fatal, according to police data.

First responders carry overdose antidote. Many members of the public also carry antidote thanks in part to groups like Max's Mission.

A broad range of Rogue Valley organizations get funding from Measure 110, including the Family Nurturing Center, the Grants Pass Sobering Center and providers of homeless shelter beds, addiction treatment, mental health care and physical health care.

Wolcott said Measure 110 needs reforms, but abandoning efforts to help people would be the wrong move.

"It's such a political hot button right now, and the worst thing we can do is to see it as all-or-nothing where we repeal it and go back to what didn't work," she said.

OnTrack and the Medford City Council have separately called for Measure 110 reforms.

Their recommendations include funding residential treatment and detox, funding recovery housing, and getting rid of the oversight council and letting local communities make funding decisions.

The Medford City Council is also asking for possession of user amounts of illicit drugs to become a misdemeanor again.

Police can arrest people for misdemeanors and felonies, but are restricted to giving out tickets for violations like drug possession under Measure 110. A Measure 110 ticket costs \$100 with no penalty for nonpayment.

Measure 110 critics say that has led to an explosion of public drug use with no consequences.

Wolcott said OnTrack has not taken a position on whether possession of user quantities of drugs should be a misdemeanor.

The Oregon Legislature is expected to prioritize housing, homelessness and addiction issues when it reconvenes on Feb. 5 for a five-week short session.

"I do believe there is some traction politically and I believe both Democrats and Republicans are prioritizing behavioral health," Wolcott said. "I think we'll learn a lot in the short session coming up with the Legislature — and hopefully there will be opportunities to add residential beds."

Funding for residential treatment and detox facilities can come from other sources as well.

Gov. Tina Kotek's office said Tuesday her 2023 accomplishments included working with the Legislature to provide \$200 million to increase detox and residential treatment capacity, provide incentives for the addiction treatment and mental health treatment workforce, and increase services for people likely to end up in the Oregon State Hospital.

Wolcott said OnTrack hasn't seen that translate into more substance use disorder treatment for adults, although she has seen gains in youth treatment.

Kotek's office said the governor and health management organizations also cooperated to boost youth behavioral health services by \$25 million.

Behavioral health is a catchall term covering addiction and mental health issues.

Reach reporter Vickie Aldous at 541-474-3813 or valdous@thedailycourier.com.

Retirement is now on the menu for prominent Grants Pass restaurateur

Those close to two-time Oregon Restaurateur of the Year winner Dave Thomason knew he was getting ready to retire. But most people found out when Taprock Northwest Grill, his flagship eatery on the Rogue River in Grants Pass, went up for sale this week. [Read More »](#)

3 days of events planned in Grants Pass to honor MLK

While the upcoming Martin Luther King Jr. celebration in Grants Pass will certainly honor the legacy of the civil rights leader, it also will raise up the work of ordinary citizens. [Read More »](#)

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409 S.E. 7th Street, Grants Pass, OR 97526-3003 | P.O. Box 1468, Grants Pass, OR 97528-0330
Phone: (541) 474-3700 | Toll-Free in Oregon: (800) 228-0457.
Office Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

