



Penobscot Community
Health Care

From the Desk of Noah Nesin, MD, FAAFP

VP of Medical Affairs

I would like to share with you recommendations of the Treatment/Recovery group of the Maine Opiate Collaborative, a task force formed by the US Attorney's office to help to address opioid addiction in Maine. I served on this arm of the Collaborative and we had a large and enthusiastic group who made a lot of recommendations!

I want to focus on the most critical of these; **Increase access to evidence based Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) across all 9 public health districts in Maine, with a goal of reducing overdose mortality by 50% each year.** Broadly speaking we recommended the following:

- Analyze resources and develop integrated MAT services in all 9 public health districts.
- Monitor access on a quarterly basis and make adjustments as necessary.
- To the extent possible, prioritize all available funding for Substance Use Disorders to support these efforts.

We also specifically recommended expanding access to MAT in Primary Care by:

- Promoting culture change and addressing bias about addiction through public and provider education.
- Creating practice standards for screening for substance use disorders (SUD), providing evidence based treatment for SUD, providing no-cost Suboxone waiver training for primary care providers and developing a peer support network of clinicians experienced in this field.
- Exploring support systems for these services, such as centralized urine drug testing and pill/strip count services.
- Identifying opportunities for people to enter treatment as they transition from emergency departments, hospitals, obstetrics wards and prison.
- Increasing the availability of naloxone to reverse overdoses.
- Reducing barriers to treatment by expanding access to insurance, including the expansion of MaineCare and ensure adequate coverage for treatment of SUD.
- Seek all available funding to support these efforts.
- Encourage Federally Qualified Health Centers to take advantage of available resources to expand access to MAT.

This is not a complete list but it does hit the highlights. In addition, with the passage of the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, which allows Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants to prescribe Suboxone and may provide important new funding to support these efforts, the Obama administration's order which will allow experienced Suboxone providers to care for 275 patients (up from 100), plus PCHC's HRSA substance abuse treatment expansion grant and the work of the Community Health Leadership Board, there is real reason for hope that we can make important progress in meeting this vital need for the people of Maine.