

Saranac Lake rehab opens first methadone clinic in Franklin County



Aaron Marbone Oct 16, 2026

1 of 2



St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment & Recovery Centers Behavioral Health Director Emily Gokey stands at the counter in the Saranac Lake center's methadone clinic, the first in Franklin County.

Aaron Marbone

Buy Now

SARANAC LAKE — “The bottom line is methadone saves lives,” St. Joseph's Addiction Treatment & Recovery Centers' Network Chief Operations Officer Jennifer DiTullio said.



The medication used to treat opioid use disorder relieves withdrawals and cravings. It helps to stabilize the body as it recovers from addiction. It must be taken daily, usually as a drink, and it can only be supplied at licensed clinics.

Until recently, people in the Tri-Lakes who rely on the medication to recover from opioid use have had to travel to Plattsburgh and Canton — each more than an hour away – for their daily dose.

But in August, St. Joe's expanded its outpatient services in Saranac Lake, opening an Outpatient Opioid Treatment Program at the Robert R. Reiss Community Services Center at 50 John Munn Road.

It's the first and only location in Franklin County that offers methadone.

"Too often the barrier to recovery isn't willingness to get help, it's whether help is close enough to reach," DiTullio said.

For years, St. Joe's Network Senior Vice President Kati Jock said that people have traveled hours daily for treatment. This makes it hard for them to hold jobs, support their children, attend school and keep their recovery on track.

“Especially in snow,” she added.

Bringing care closer to home allows people to continue with their lives and stay connected with their families, all things that are beneficial to their recovery.

“Being able to access treatment shouldn't be the barrier,” St. Joe's Behavioral Health Director Emily Gokey said.

More than 4,500 New Yorkers died of overdoses in 2024. Jock said the increase of synthetic opioids like fentanyl are creating more complex cases for health care providers — cases where methadone is the most effective treatment.

There is a 59% decrease in opioid overdose deaths in patients receiving methadone and a 38% decrease for patients receiving buprenorphine.

Methadone is more effective for addiction to synthetic substances like fentanyl or xylazine, DiTullio said, because it does not have a ceiling like buprenorphine does. At a certain point increasing a buprenorphine dose does not have an increased benefit.

The center also offers suboxone. Suboxone is a take-home prescription. Gokey said some patients are worried they'll take too much of it and run out, or have a history of non-compliance and feel it's better for the professionals to monitor their dosage.

Methadone is highly regulated by the DEA. The building has been outfitted with safety and security technology to meet regulations — there are badge and code secured doors, alarms, a safe bolted to the floor, dispensing machines, windows, mirrors and security cameras.

The renovation of the building and purchase of all the equipment needed to securely administer methadone was paid for with \$600,000 in grants from the New York State Opioid Settlement Fund. This fund was created after the state sued opioid manufacturers and distributors and settled for several billion dollars.

Inside the clinic

Gokey said the center dispenses methadone for close to 20 people a day on average right now.

Patients check in with a specific ID card and sit in a waiting room. Inside the waiting room, tables and shelves hold overdose reversal kits, test strips, first-aid kits, hand sanitizer, condoms and resource pamphlets. Each bathroom is well stocked with harm reduction supplies that Gokey said staff are constantly restocking.

"This stuff goes quickly," she said. "That's what it's here for. It's great that they take it."

When the patient is called to get their dose, they go up to a window — it looks like a bank teller window — and are given a cup of the medication.

Next to the window is a water cooler and a bowl of flavored LifeSavers to cut through the very harsh taste of the medication. Even though it is cherry flavored, Gokey said the medication is known for its strong, bitter taste.

The Outpatient with Opioid Treatment Program is open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturday from 7 to 9 a.m.

Gokey said the nurses are very flexible and helpful to work with patients. If someone calls and tells them they're running late for their dose, they'll usually stay a bit late to make sure that person gets their treatment.

Although the center is closed on Sundays, patients get a take-home dose on Saturday, Gokey said.

The program accepts most major insurance plans, offers a sliding fee scale and provides enrollment assistance for low- or no-cost coverage.

"No one is turned away," a St. Joe's news release states.

In-house treatment

St. Joe's has 62 inpatient beds at its facility across town. If patients there need methadone, they can provide it internally, in-house instead of sending them out for "guest dosing."

"It's difficult to get someone set up for guest dosing," DiTullio said.

When it is difficult to collaborate between the original prescriber and local prescriber, sometimes people choose to not enter treatment there because they would miss several days of dosing.

Doing in-house dosing speeds up the admissions process, DiTullio said.

DiTullio said that just a few days can be an impactful time for someone in recovery. They could change their mind about getting sober.

Jock said that walking into the doors of a treatment program is hard and takes courage. The nurses' goal is to meet them with compassion, dignity and respect.

The center on John Munn road has a variety of services there. DiTullio said this removes the stigma of someone going to a methadone clinic.

The building has rooms for individual and group counseling, a laptop for telehealth and internet access, adolescent and family services and medication for alcohol use disorder management like acamprosate, disulfiram and naltrexone.

The building also has an exam room with an EKG machine. Physical health must be tracked during methadone treatment because it can be dangerous for people with cardiac issues. They also do blood draws, physicals and primary care work there.

St. Joe's also has outpatient clinics in Malone, Ticonderoga and Keeseville which can use this clinic.

St. Joe's is part of the Daxia Integrated Health Network with Citizen Advocates, which operates across Northern New York.

Gokey said the center is bringing in more nurses than they ever have. Currently, they're looking for another counselor.

To learn more or begin services at St. Joe's, call 518-891-5353 or visit stjoestreatment.org.