



Milwaukee Addiction Treatment Initiative

NEWS RELEASE

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Milwaukee Addiction Treatment Initiative Works to Increase Access to Treatment in Milwaukee County

Groundbreaking Collaboration Pairs National, Local Funding

MILWAUKEE—More than 80 organizations statewide are collaborating on the Milwaukee Addiction Treatment Initiative, a groundbreaking effort to expand access to high-quality treatment for drug and alcohol addiction for individuals who need it.

MATI will promote sweeping change in policy, financing and purchasing standards, and accessible treatment options to achieve health coverage parity for those seeking treatment for addiction issues. Community Advocates, Inc. will serve as the lead agency for the Initiative on behalf of MATI partners: the Benedict Center, City of Milwaukee Health Department, Justice 2000, La Causa, M&S Clinical Services, MICAH, Milwaukee County Department of Health and Social Services, Milwaukee County District Attorney, Wisconsin Department of Corrections, and the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services.

Milwaukee has a very substantial addiction treatment gap. The most recent analysis prepared by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration found that 66,240 Milwaukee County residents 12 years and older needed but did not receive treatment for alcohol addiction. Another 16,020 residents needed but did not receive treatment for drug addiction.

This alarming gap in Milwaukee mirrors a national problem. In 2007, 23.2 million Americans needed treatment for drug or alcohol addiction, but only 10 percent of them were able to get treatment for this chronic health condition. The vast majority of those who need help are unable to get addiction treatment, either due to lack of health insurance, inadequate insurance coverage or a lack of treatment services in communities.

MATI is funded by a \$600,000 grant from the Open Society Institute, Baltimore, as well as grants from the Helen Bader Foundation and the Zilber Family Foundation.

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“If this disease had any other name, the residents of Milwaukee would not tolerate seeing thousands of neighbors, family members and coworkers remaining untreated,” said Victor A. Capoccia, director of the Closing the Addiction Treatment Gap initiative. “Addiction is a chronic health condition, and it can be treated effectively. This important initiative in Milwaukee will enable more residents who need addiction treatment to get it.”

The Initiative has also attracted the support and participation of more than 40 additional partners including the offices of Senators Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold, Congresswoman Gwen Moore, the Governor of Wisconsin, the Mayor of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee County Executive. Representatives from the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, the Greater Milwaukee Committee, the Medical College of Wisconsin and many others will provide leadership and expertise by serving on a variety of committees and work groups.

Community Advocates was selected from a pool of 35 applicants after a competitive, rigorous selection process. Each proposal was evaluated by a panel that included national experts in addiction treatment advocacy and financing. Twelve organizations were selected for full-day site visits. A review team then evaluated the projects’ strengths, financing and advocacy strategies and recommended the final eight.

Community Advocates is the largest human needs advocacy agency in Wisconsin and is a major contributor to collaborative networks that address Milwaukee’s most pressing social issues, including lack of access to health care.

Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm serves as champion of the Initiative.

“I strongly support the Milwaukee Addiction Treatment Initiative,” said Chisholm. “This broad-based coalition of law enforcement officials and organizations, community-based nonprofit organizations, addiction service providers, advocacy groups and policy-makers not only represents a true cross-section of Milwaukee but also demonstrates our community’s common purpose and clear vision as we strive to dramatically improve the financing and delivery of addiction services. I will do everything within my power—from chairing the Executive Committee to convincing other elected officials to raising local matching funds—to make MATI a success.”

Local funders will also play an important role in supporting the Initiative.

“We are pleased to pledge \$150,000 over three years to the Initiative, which will expand substance abuse treatment services to hundreds of Milwaukeeans suffering from alcoholism and addiction,” said Joseph J. Zilber, chairman of the Zilber Family Foundation. “The Initiative is an important step forward in delivering critical public health services that not only help individuals, but also families and neighborhoods.”

Douglas M. Jansson, President of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation has stated that “the need for improving addiction treatment delivery is a critical issue in our community.”

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David Riemer, Director of Policy and Planning for Community Advocates and MATI Project Director stated, “The Milwaukee Addiction Treatment Initiative is designed to help Milwaukee make real progress in recognizing the magnitude of our addiction treatment gap, in guaranteeing that every Wisconsinite who needs addiction treatment has health insurance that pays for it, and in better integrating the actual delivery of addiction treatment. MATI presents a unique opportunity for our community to take a bold step forward to solve this serious health problem.”

The Open Society Institute grant to Community Advocates is one of eight demonstration grants totaling \$4.8 million to organizations across the country, including a university research center, a state government agency and advocacy groups. The grants are part of a \$10 million initiative supported by OSI to close the treatment gap, expand comprehensive treatment systems and improve the quality of treatment. The initiative aims to mobilize public support for expanded treatment by increasing public funding, broadening insurance coverage and achieving greater program efficiency.

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The Open Society Institute, a private operating and grantmaking foundation, works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. To achieve its mission, OSI seeks to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. OSI works in over 60 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East, as well as in the United States.
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Established in 1976, **Community Advocates, Inc.** is the largest human needs advocacy agency in Wisconsin and one of the few remaining community-based organizations of any kind that welcomes walk-in clients five days a week. CA provides skilled and results-focused advocacy and services to low-income individuals and families. Services include health care assistance, safety, utilities and housing assistance, disabilities advocacy and public policy advocacy.
<http://www.communityadvocates.net>