

# Entities win grants to ramp up addiction treatment

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Enhanced levels of substance use treatment are in the pipeline for Montrose, which experts hope will lead to lower addiction rates.

The Center for Mental Health and River Valley Family Health Center each recently received a cut of \$4.6 million made available to rural communities through the state Office of Behavioral Health. The grant fund was established under a law passed last year to help increase resources for rural areas grappling with addiction. The local allocations are being disbursed through the managed service organization, West Slope Casa.

The Center received almost \$515,000, which it will use to develop an intensive outpatient treatment program, and River Valley nabbed about \$240,000 that will help it add a dedicated provider for medication assisted treatment for addiction.

“We were excited to be recipients,” said Amanda Jones, chief clinical officer for the Center for Mental Health.

The Center has two targets: the intensive outpatient treatment, based in Montrose and open to other substance use treatment providers for referrals, plus increasing professional training and credentialing of staff.

“The reason for our interest in wanting to expand this particular level of care is, one, that regionally, we do not have an active, open community referral for intensive outpatient treatment,” Jones said.

This type of programming is offered multiple times a week, with varying levels of treatment intervention, including individual and family therapy, psychiatric or medical support, and a strong group treatment format, plus wraparound services.

“It really is taking what is that next level of treatment intervention for people to provide a higher level of care, so that people are getting active and engaged treatment, and so we can hopefully intervene at that level and help people transition and continue to live in the community,” Jones said.

This type of treatment can prevent the need for higher-level care.

“For us, this really was the next level of care to build from outpatient, but also to have a level of substance use treatment that would help to hopefully prevent the need for longer-term residential treatment where people are needing to be outside of their homes and

potentially disrupting their homes or other family members and community members,” Jones said.

Expanding the training and professional credentials of the Center’s workforce will bring another level of expertise to treatment locations, including the detox beds at the Center’s walk-in crisis clinic. More substance use treatment services would flow into the counties where care is provided, as a regional workforce is developed.

The grant allocation constitutes a two-year award, with the possibility of additional funding, and will be used to develop the Center’s framework for intensive outpatient treatment.

The other grant recipient, River Valley, is a federally qualified health clinic with offices in Olathe, Montrose and Delta. It has six providers who are able to write prescriptions for Suboxone, a medication used in medication assisted treatment. But all six of these providers also focus on primary care. The \$240,000 River Valley received will be used to hire a provider just for medication assisted treatment, and a nurse. Some of the money also will be applied to the salary of the clinic’s part-time care coordinator.

“Substance abuse is still an issue,” River Valley CEO Jeremy Carroll said. “This grant allows us to allocate an entire medical provider to only the focus of substance use and medication assisted therapy.”

The nurse the clinic is adding will work closely with that provider. The nurse also will be able to visit clients’ homes for induction into medication assisted therapy.

There is a clear need for more substance abuse treatment options, Carroll and Jones said. Although addiction knows no county boundary — and according to the Office of Behavioral Health, more than 54,000 residents received treatment and detox services in fiscal year 2018-19 — the state recognized an acute need in rural areas, which have fewer resources.

“When you look at the needs assessment completed by River Valley, Montrose Memorial Hospital, Delta County Memorial Hospital and the Gunnison hospital, all four of those entities had mental health, substance abuse and opioid addiction in the top of their needs assessment,” Carroll said.

“I feel like there is very much an indicated need for this level of care. ... Intensive outpatient programming is a recognized level of care of substance use treatment,” Jones said.

“We have not had that level of care for referral. By not having this level of care before, we’re very excited to be able to, quite frankly, see the impact this will bring to our community.”