

 CASE STUDY

## Strengthening MAT Processes and OUD Care in Emergency Departments

### THE CLIENT

Hospital Sisters Health System (HSHS), St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan, Wisconsin

### BACKGROUND

The prevalence of opioid use disorder (OUD) and the resultant harms from this disorder continue to escalate in the United States. The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics released a **report** noting that in 2020, drug overdose deaths in the United States increased by nearly 30% over the previous year, reaching an all-time high of more than 100,000. The majority of these deaths are attributable to opioids.

### THE CHALLENGE

Many individuals with OUD are seen in the emergency department (ED) due to overdose attempts, OUD related conditions like skin infections, or other medical issues where they acknowledge opioid use. However, most EDs are not prepared to initiate lifesaving, evidence-based treatment for OUD in the form of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT).

HSHS, St. Nicholas Hospital, honoring their Franciscan tradition to provide holistic care with special attention to the most vulnerable individuals, committed to tackling the OUD issue head on.

### THE APPROACH

With help from a team of HMA clinicians including a primary care physician, an addictionologist, emergency medicine clinicians, and a social worker, HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital applied for a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. The grant funds were used to strengthen their processes to initiate MAT in the ED, connect individuals with OUD with peer recovery specialists directly in the ED, and develop timely referrals for outpatient continuation of MAT.

The HMA team of **Margaret Kirkegaard, MD, Shannon Robinson, MD, Scott Haga, PAC, Shelly Virva, LCSW, and Corey Waller, MD** performed an initial assessment of ED processes for HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital, facilitated development of electronic medical record (EMR) tools for OUD order sets and referrals, and helped the hospital identify and tackle barriers to more robust MAT prescribing.

HMA also prepared and delivered a series of OUD educational modules that were tailored to individual clinical disciplines including didactic webinars and short, educational videos designed to fit the reality of a busy ED during a global pandemic.

### THE RESULTS

HSHS St. Nicholas Hospital, with HMA's continued assistance, is currently working on strengthening their OUD clinical processes and expanding MAT initiation in the ED to other HSHS hospitals and neighboring hospital systems.

**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROJECT:**  
[www.stnicholashospital.org/opioid](http://www.stnicholashospital.org/opioid)



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