

# **Madison County is taking it to the MAT to combat heroin addiction**

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## **Stop Heroin Addiction**

EDWARDSVILLE — Madison County plans to release its budget proposal on Wednesday and it includes \$500,000 for heroin addiction treatment.

The funding is part of the Mental Health Board budget that would allow Madison County to bring in a medication assisted treatment (MAT) provider.

“The county deals with the collateral costs of addiction,” Chairman Kurt Prenzler said. “It’s everywhere in Madison County.”

Prenzler said there are not enough resources in the County to treat heroin addicts.

“Many of the addicts are unable to get help unless they get arrested,” he said. “The solution shouldn’t be you need to end up in jail to get treatment because that is costing the county.”

Jennifer Roth, executive director of the Mental Health Board, agreed. She said drug addiction is also an illness that if untreated can be fatal.

The proposed MAT funding would assist in providing drug-based treatment for people addicted to prescription opioids and heroin. The Mental Health Board would be responsible for putting together an RFP to bring in a provider that would treat the addicted.

A majority of those addicted who end up in jail use again after getting out.

Heroin seeking addicts are typically often unemployed and in and out of jail. They are a burden to their family and the county judicial system.

Last week, a pilot program kicked off at the Madison County Jail to treat five inmates with Vivitrol, a drug that stops heroin cravings for a month at a time.

The “Behind the Walls” program is being funded by a grant received through Madison County Drug Court. The grant was awarded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration and is part of the Opioid State Targeted Response money dedicated to providing jail-based services.

The \$540,000 grant is being shared with McLean County.

“We are hopeful this will be a successful program,” Sheriff John Lakin said. “We recognize there is an opioid crisis that is causing a lot of issues.”

In 2014, Madison County launched its Heroin Task Force to look for ways to combat the growing epidemic.

“I am fighting every day to keep heroin dealers off the street,” State’s Attorney Gibbons said. “We have to deal with those that are addicted as well and it’s better to do it before they are arrested or overdose.”

Drug overdose deaths in Madison County continued to rise from 7 in 2009 to 71 in 2016.

“Heroin is destroying lives and families across Madison County,” Prenzler said. “The mental health board has money available now that can be used for treatment. This money will end up saving lives and I hope the county board votes to approve these funds.”