

For Immediate Release
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Innovative Opioid Treatment For Adolescents And Young Adults Now Underway

HARTFORD – A new treatment for young people using opioids is now available to help families in towns across Connecticut. The program, known as the ASSERT Treatment Model (ATM), provides youth up to age 21 years old and their families with six months of evidence-based intensive family treatment, medication assisted treatment (MAT), and recovery support services for up to 12 months. It is available now to families in 121 Connecticut towns and has the capacity to serve as many as 94 youth and families at a time. It is not yet known how many of the youth will be struggling with opioid use and how many will be dealing with other substance use disorders.

Department of Children and Families (DCF) Commissioner Joette Katz said the opioid crisis has had a big impact on child welfare agencies around the nation but that Connecticut is among the leaders in addressing it among both adults and now youth.

“Until now, opioid treatment has been aimed at adults -- largely ignoring the growing problem of heroin and prescription drug misuse among youth,” Commissioner Katz said. “We are working to change that in Connecticut by using federal funding in an innovative manner that holds real promise because our experience shows the treatments are effective.”

The program is funding four agencies through a federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The ATM approach is currently only used in Connecticut. DCF talked with advocates, young adults, and families about their treatment experiences. Then local and national experts in family therapy and recovery management collaborated with DCF to build the model. ATM combines several evidence-based treatments that are usually stand-alone services into a single, integrated program. The hope is this program will provide a “one-stop shop” for youth and their families, eliminating barriers to receiving multiple needed services to combat opioid addiction. DCF is optimistic that this new treatment program will stem the rise in opioid addiction among youth by blocking the pipeline from misuse to addiction, and prevent opioid overdose deaths. The ATM program is a critical piece of the Department’s efforts to combat the opioid crisis, which also includes using private funding to provide in-home intensive substance use treatment services to parents at risk for having their child enter foster care.

According to 2015 data from the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, the nation’s lead agency for behavioral health statistics, 276,000 U.S. adolescents were current users of nonmedical pain relievers, with 122,000 having an addiction to prescription pain medications. An estimated 21,000 adolescents had used heroin in the year prior. In Connecticut, mothers from the U.S. Attorney’s Heroin Education Action Team (HEAT) have shared their stories publicly about how prescribed pain medications led their children to substance use disorder and eventually to death by overdose. State statistics show that more than 1,000 people died as a result of opioid use last year. In public forums throughout the state, parents describe barriers to finding and getting their adolescent and young adult children into treatment, especially for opioids.

Below is contact information for the treatment providers across the state.

ATM Program Contacts

Major Towns Served	Agency	Contact	Phone	Email
Meriden New Britain	Wheeler Clinic	Merideth Talbot	860-810-0857	Mtalbot@Wheelerclinic.org
Hartford Manchester	Community Health Resources (CHR)	Katherine Fontaine	860-978-3096	kfontaine@CHRHealth.org
Danbury Torrington Waterbury	Connecticut Junior Republic (CJR)	Sandra Arguelles	203-757-9939	Sarguelles@ciryouth.org
New London Norwich Willimantic	United Community & Family Services (UCFS)	Cyndi Palma	860-822-4292	Cpalma@ucfs.org