

CKF receives grant to address opioid abuse

Salina's Central Kansas Foundation has been awarded nearly \$1 million in federal grant funds to prevent, treat and provide support for people with opioid addiction in a 65-county area of central and western Kansas, the secretary of the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services announced Tuesday.

The \$990,206 grant to CKF was one of four totaling about \$2.6 million awarded during the first year of a two-year grant to address the state's opioid abuse crisis, according to a news release.

KDADS Secretary Tim Keck said Kansas is the 16th highest opioid-prescribing state, indicating that opioid addiction is becoming a growing concern.

According to information on the Kansas Department of Health and Environment website, more than 100 people a year statewide have died of opioid drug poisoning since 2012, with the highest number being 128 opioid deaths occurring in 2014. In the past two years, drug poisoning deaths from methamphetamine have been approaching the same levels. In 2016, 95 of the 310 drug poisoning deaths statewide were attributed to methamphetamine, while 104 were opioid related.

3 areas of focus

Brenda Haaga, project director for the grant and vice president for prevention, early intervention and education at CKF, said the primary areas of focus during the August to April 2018 grant period will be:

Increasing the use of an assessment tool in medical and health care settings to identify opioid users or people at risk for addiction. After questions are asked, individuals in need of treatment would be referred.

Expanding access to buprenorphine, a nonaddictive opioid withdrawal management medication, by increasing the number of doctors trained to prescribe it. Haaga said the medication is part of a comprehensive treatment plan that includes counseling and participation in social support programs.

Improving access to evidence-based, medication-assisted treatment and psychosocial treatment.

Extra support

Haaga said Saline, Thomas, Dickinson, McPherson and Ellis counties are among 12 counties CKF has identified as target areas for additional support based on increases in overdose death data. She said in other counties the focus will be on education about the dangers of opioid addiction and help available.

"I don't think we'll have a hard time getting the health field engaged because I think they're probably seeing it," she said. "They don't want patients to die."

For some people, an opioid addiction can lead to a heroin addiction because heroin is usually cheaper and easier to obtain, Haaga said. According to the Kansas Tracking and Reporting of Controlled Substances prescription drug monitoring program, more than 256 million pills were dispensed through 4.2 million narcotic prescriptions in 2014.

There's an app

Haaga said a portion of the grant money will be used to expand use of a smartphone app that has proven effective for many of CKF's drug treatment patients. On Saturday, Haaga was in Baltimore to receive

an Outstanding Clinical Care award at the National Conference on Addiction Disorders for CKF's use of the A-CHESS app, which supports patients in addiction recovery.

CKF first started using the app developed at the University of Wisconsin as part of a pilot program about six years ago. Currently, CKF holds 150 licenses to Addiction Comprehensive Health Enhancement Support System apps, which are offered to patients in recovery, Haaga said.

She said the app now owned by CHESS Mobile Health offers a variety of content, including podcasts, music about addiction by recovering addicts, information about where the nearest recovery center support group is meeting, motivational quotes, personal stories of recovery and advice for dealing with urges.

The app also allows users to track their progress toward goals, includes information on their treatment plan, alerts them when it's time for medication or an appointment and provides a quick way to private message or group chat with others in their treatment group. Patients check in weekly on the app, and if they find themselves in danger of relapse, they can push the beacon button for professional help.

"We have a lot of success stories from people using the app," she said. "CKF was able to give a lot of input about what worked well and things that should be added. We can upload content. We approach it as part of treatment. It's important to look to technology as an engagement tool. That's where people are at."

