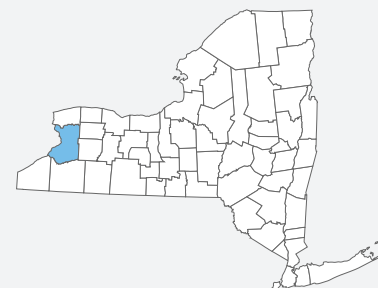


Erie County, N.Y.

# Rapid Access to Treatment



## Rapid Evaluation for Appropriate Placement (REAP)

Fourteen law enforcement agencies within Erie County participate in the Rapid Evaluation for Appropriate Placement (REAP) initiative led by the Erie County Opiate Epidemic Task Force. REAP focuses on law enforcement connecting individuals with opioid use disorders to treatment, rather than jail. If an individual with an opioid use disorder enters a police department to request assistance, he/she is assessed by a counselor and connected to treatment and support services. Each individual is subject to a personal search. If drugs are found, they will be confiscated; however, no charges will be filed. If transportation is available, the department will provide a warm hand-off and/or transportation to a local treatment program.

## Buffalo MATTERS

The University of Buffalo's Department of Emergency Services implemented Buffalo MATTERS (Medication-Assisted Treatment & Emergency Referrals) in 2016. This program connects people with an opioid use disorder who come into area emergency departments to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) providers in the community. Individuals who agree to be referred receive a voucher for seven days of buprenorphine, redeemable at any participating pharmacy in the region at no cost and are connected to peer navigators for support. Participating hospitals receive a tablet connected to a database of area treatment providers to book an appointment within 72 hours. The model is available in 17 Erie County emergency rooms and has expanded across the state of New York. The University of Buffalo and Erie County provide guidance to other counties on implementation.

This series of briefs highlights innovations happening in Erie County, New York, the site of a recent peer exchange for the Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP) grantees. Erie County was selected as the site of this peer exchange due to its comprehensive and collaborative approach to addressing the opioid crisis.

The misuse of opiates became a growing public health and justice issue in Erie County, in the 2010s. In 2016, the county of 925,000 people experienced 301 opiate overdose deaths. Opiate painkillers were the number one prescribed drug in the county in 2012, topping 80,000 prescriptions. This, along with the closing of two major substance abuse treatment clinics in Erie County in 2013, led County Executive Mark Polancarz to declare a public health crisis and task county and other local leadership with finding solutions to save lives. Since 2016, **the county has invested over \$1.7 billion** of county, state, federal and grant funding in developing an array of interventions **to curb the number of opiate-related deaths and connect county residents to treatment.**

## Mobile Treatment Units

In addition to Buffalo MATTERS, service providers in Erie County also provide mobile treatment units. Operated by community-based provider BestSelf Behavioral Health, mobile treatment units are specialized vans customized to facilitate video conferencing with medical professionals for the purpose of obtaining a prescription for treatment medication. The units are staffed by a nurse and a peer support specialist for intake and assessment, but no medications or money are kept in the unit. The unmarked mobile unit can travel to a patient's home or park in a neighborhood or other public area to improve access to services.

## Crisis Line

Crisis Services of Erie County operate a 24-hour hotline that provides information on treatment and overdose, referrals to treatment providers and connections to support. Hotline operators are trained in motivational interviewing to successfully facilitate referrals. In 2019, the hotline received 1,214 calls.

## Harm Reduction Services

Finally, Erie County provides funding to Evergreen Health Services, a harm reduction clinic. Here, patients can exchange used needles for clean ones, receive counseling and peer support and obtain other health services such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) testing, general health screening, treatment and prevention.

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In Erie County, if an individual with an opioid use disorder enters a police department to request assistance, he/she is **assessed by a counselor and connected to treatment and support services.**

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