



In a joint collaboration dedicated to providing additional resources for addiction and rehab center patients, Northeastern Health System and the Cherokee County Health Services Council recently received Rural Communities Opioid Response Program grant funding to aid their efforts.

“It is an initiative to deliver behavioral health care and support to individuals living in Cherokee County with opioid use disorder, substance use disorder, or other mental health conditions,” said NHS Behavioral Health Director Amber Masters.

In September, the Health Resources and Services Administration announced their investment of more than \$104 million to expand treatment and prevention services for substance use in rural communities nationwide as part of RCORP. The announcement highlighted funding through three programs: Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Access; Implementation; and Behavioral Health Care Support.

The \$587,000 grant received by NHS is for Behavioral Health Care Support, Masters said.

The applicant organization, CCHSC, received a RCORP planning grant in 2018 and an implementation grant in 2020, which was aimed at increasing medication-assisted treatment services. In 2021, NHS, a CCHSC coalition partner, established the NHS Addiction Resource Center and added MAT providers, and board certified Addiction Medicine physicians, Dr. Jason Ballew and Dr. Jennifer Mathis.

“This behavioral health application addresses systems barriers and challenges related to transportation, telemedicine, housing and training for behavioral health providers and support for employers hiring staff with OUD,” Masters said. “All of these activities complement and support efforts of the current implementation grant and none overlap current services.”

The four-year grant will be used for transportation, providing a vehicle and driver to help connect patients to their appointments, and training and public education.

“The grant activities will focus on alleviating structural and system-level barriers, improving the quality and sustainability of rural behavioral health care services, and improving the capacity of the behavioral health care system to address community risk factors,” Masters said. “All resources for RCORP-BH will be administered by agencies with program sites within Cherokee County.”

In addition to training and transportation, Masters said the grant will seek to increase the employability of individuals in OUD/SUD recovery through an employer toolkit to educate and assist employers in building their workforce while also reducing the number of people and their families experiencing poverty due to unemployment.

Devoted to treating substance abuse, the NHS Addiction Resource Center, located at 1323 W. Keetoowah St., has a wide range of treatment programs such as the Opioid Treatment Program, Addiction Medicine Specialty Clinic and the Intensive Outpatient Program.

For more information on the NHS Addiction Resource Center and its services, call 918-931-3890.

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