

CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

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Adolescent addiction recovery site will serve those without insurance

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The Adolescent Addiction Recovery Center opened in late October at Children's Hospital of Michigan-Troy.

Children's Foundation and Children's Hospital of Michigan physicians group University Pediatricians have teamed up to open an outpatient substance abuse treatment site for adolescents.

The Adolescent Addiction Recovery Center opened in late October at Children's Hospital of Michigan-Troy in donated space on the second floor to provide counseling for youth 13-18 years old who are suffering from addiction to alcohol or drugs.

The center has more than \$1.5 million in commitments from Children's Foundation and Delta Dental Foundation.

The center is already seeing referrals and a lot of calls from as far away as Hurley Medical Center in Flint as news of its opening spreads word-of-mouth, said Mark Harrison, chief administrative officer and chief operations officer of University Pediatricians, which is operating the center. He expects the center to get referrals from parents, pediatricians, school systems and emergency departments in the region.

Substance use disorders continue to plague our society and the kids of the region, he said.

"We're taking a different approach in that we're providing treatment to anyone, regardless of their ability to pay," with backing from local funders, Harrison said.

Children's Foundation covered the \$150,000 in costs to convert the space from a clinical area to counseling and office space and rounded up about \$500,000 in annual funding for the next three years. That support includes a one-year grant from Delta Dental Foundation and three-year commitments from its own endowment and two funds under its umbrella: the Jamie Daniels Foundation and Georgie Ginopolis Endowed fund.

"The need is so great. Kids are dying every day because of this problem. We're helping solve it or at least save lives," said Larry Burns, president and CEO of Children's Foundation.

Operations

Dr. Matt LaCasse, a child and adolescent psychiatrist specializing in addiction and the lead psychiatrist at Children's Hospital of Michigan, will serve as director of the new center.

Local interest in launching a clinic dedicated to adolescent substance use brought LaCasse back to Michigan from Colorado last year.

"Like most areas in the country, there is an enormous need for adolescent substance use services here in Metro Detroit and Michigan," he said.

However, few places in Michigan treat adolescent addiction, and many that do are off-shoots of adult programs. They might provide psychotherapy but struggle with more severe cases when an adolescent psychiatrist or addiction psychiatrist is needed, he said.

The new Troy clinic is modeled after other adolescent recovery centers around the country, taking some of the best things from each, he said.

An old saying in the addiction world is, "The opposite of addiction is connection," said LaCasse, who is also an assistant professor in the Central Michigan University College of Medicine. "Addiction is often a very isolating disease. Even when using with other people, as adolescents and young adults often do, the result is isolation."

Matthew LaCasse

The clinic's psychotherapy will focus on empowering youth to make actions that bring them closer to their values and the things they care about and building connectedness with themselves, their families and those around them, LaCasse said. The clinic will also provide treatment for psychiatric issues that often accompany substance use, including anxiety and depression.

The clinic is not set up for in-patient detox treatment, but patients (especially those struggling with fentanyl and other opioid addictions) will have access to life-saving medications, and the center will work closely with clients and families to support detox and make referrals to in-patient treatment sites when needed, he said.

"In the future, we plan to continue to expand our reach by getting involved in schools and elsewhere; along with building our programming and building higher levels of care such as a residential program here in Michigan."

Funding from the foundations will help cover the costs of staff, including two therapists and an office manager, and provide a pot of money for uncompensated care. If further operating support is needed beyond year three, the foundation will find it, Burns said.

"I'm very confident that we can raise additional funds from additional resources — families, individuals, foundations — because the problem is so broad, and something needs to be done," he said.

In 2020, 281,000 people aged 12 and older needed treatment for illicit drug use but did not receive it, and 508,000 individuals aged 12 and older needed treatment for alcohol use but did not receive it, [according to the governor's office](#).

"Given what we've seen locally in Southeast Michigan and across the state, there is room for many more providers, and with the impact of COVID — growing alcohol sales, trauma, lack of coping skills, the need is only going to increase," said Kelli Dobner, chief advancement

officer at Detroit-based Samaritas, which provides research- and evidence-based substance use disorder and vaping treatment for adolescents, among other programs.

Inline Play

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