

Drug overdose deaths—in Southeast Michigan and across the country—are at their highest levels ever. During the past 12 months, overdose deaths skyrocketed 30%, driven by social isolation and associated mental anguish from the COVID-19 pandemic. These overdoses were overwhelmingly suffered by adults between the ages of 25 and 55—people in the prime of their lives. At the same time, Southeast Michigan’s drug overdose survivors experienced a dramatic reduction in access to drug treatment services. Treatment visits in Wayne County fell by 27% when compared to pre-pandemic levels, and the average wait time between requesting and receiving treatment services increased from 4.8 to 7.1 days. ACCESS’ Overdose Rapid Response Partnership with the Dearborn and Dearborn Heights Police Departments has also documented steep increases in drug overdoses and overdose deaths among Arab Americans.

A Complex Issue and the Unique Challenges in the Arab American Community

In addition to genetics, environmental factors, mental illness, and economic conditions, Arab Americans face unique challenges that aggravate substance use disorders, such as shame and stigma—prompting families to hide this disorder. This can stem from a lack of awareness, fear of legal prosecution, and/or mistrust of mainstream treatment providers. Other community factors include shortages of substance use medical professionals who speak Arabic, tendencies among therapists who are unfamiliar with the culture to separate individuals from family units, and a cultural aversion to group therapy approaches.

ACCESS: A Trusted Service Provider

ACCESS has been serving the Arab American and other vulnerable communities in Southeast Michigan for over 50 years. For more than a decade, we have been addressing the drug epidemic in different capacities, from peer recovery coaching and counseling to our ACCESS Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (ASAP)—a community coalition that raises awareness and reduces substance use among community members and youth. ACCESS also has a team that works with the Dearborn and Dearborn Heights Police Departments to engage overdose survivors in recovery treatment and harm-reduction services as part of our Overdose Rapid Response Partnership.

Stepping Up to Meet a Critical Need

Through these established community partnerships and others and our work with impacted families daily, we have witnessed the alarming rise in substance use among youth and adults that are facing an urgent need for affordable treatment options and recovery resources that can accommodate our community. In response to this demand, ACCESS has set out to establish a high-level, state-of-the-art comprehensive Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Treatment Center that is designed specifically for our community and offers bilingual and culturally sensitive programming. Through a holistic model, this Center will provide wraparound services that include treatment, short-term residential care, food assistance, housing, education, and employment, to address this multilayered issue and the varying needs of our patients. The Center will accept Medicaid and also offer free treatment to uninsured patients, ensuring that no one is turned away because of the burden associated with high treatment costs. Located on Michigan Avenue near Wyoming Road in Dearborn, this new three-story 45,000-square-foot building is in a prime location, that is both easily accessible to the community and offers patient privacy and comfort.

To launch the Substance Use Disorder Treatment Center, we need to raise \$18 million to purchase the land and build, furnish and supply the building with the necessary equipment.

The Substance Use Disorder Treatment Center: A Holistic Approach to Treatment and Recovery

The Substance Use Disorder Treatment Center will remove barriers that prevent community members from seeking help. Services will be person-centered and tailored to individual and family needs, meeting patients where they are and providing them with a personalized treatment plan. The Center will provide evidence-based treatment and recovery methods, including Medication-Assisted Treatment, which employs the use of prescribed medication, approved by the FDA, to normalize brain chemistry and reduce cravings. The Center will operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, offer culturally sensitive programming, and employ an estimated 30 new and existing health care and paraprofessional staff. These staff (including bilingual providers, nurses, substance use treatment clinicians, peer recovery professionals, administrators, and security staff) will reside in the metro Detroit communities they serve.

The Center is designed to offer intensive and comprehensive treatment programming to help patients in their transition period as they recover. This period, after the initial detoxification, is vital and can be extremely challenging without resources and a network of support. Therefore, critical outpatient treatment services such as recovery coaching, clinical counseling, group therapy, and psychiatric services will also be provided at the Center. In addition, alternative methods for treatment such as pain management through meditation, mindfulness, exercise, acupuncture, and yoga will be offered to help patients cope with chronic pain, without the reliance on narcotics.

With its person-centered approach in mind, the Center will also offer wraparound support services to address the socio-economic challenges faced by patients that can lead to relapse if left unresolved. This includes legal support, housing, basic needs, food assistance, access to educational courses including English language classes, workforce development, and mental and physical health care. These services will be housed on the first floor of the Center, along with the outpatient programs. The second floor will serve as the home base for detox services, while the third floor will be designated for short-term residential care for patients who need continuity of care and a supportive setting after detoxification.

Substance Use Disorder Treatment Center services will be structured as follows:

Inpatient Detoxification using 32 licensed, sub-acute beds for short-term coordinated care with a 72-hour medically supervised treatment program that provides patients with crisis stabilization and rapid detoxification management.

Short-term Residential Care lasting up to 28 days for patients who are in need of a supportive residential setting. This service will be operational and available to patients one year after the opening of the Center.

Holistic Outpatient Treatment

- **Recovery Support Services and Care Coordination** through the assignment of a peer recovery coach and the development of an individualized recovery plan. Coaches are recovered substance users, allowing for the creation of a compassionate environment and a unique level of comfort for patients.
- **Intensive Clinical Counseling** with Certified Alcohol and Drug Counselors and Certified Advanced Alcohol and Drug Counselors, offering individual, family and group therapy that is focused on abstinence and learning techniques to resist drug use.
- **Psychiatric Services** including comprehensive evaluations, assessments, consultation, psychotherapy, and medication management.
- **Medication-Assisted Treatment** Employing the use of two FDA-approved medications —buprenorphine and naltrexone— to help with withdrawal.
- **Pain Management and Wellness** using alternative therapies to help patients manage pain without resorting to narcotics.

Supportive Social Services leveraging ACCESS' extensive social and human services, ranging from workforce development and food assistance, to English language learning services and legal help.

Prevention and Outreach engaging community stakeholders through outreach efforts to spread awareness and battle stigma and shame.

Working Together to Save Lives

Now, more than ever, it is critical for our community to step up as partners and unite to address this alarming epidemic that has claimed the lives of too many. We hope to count on your partnership and support in bringing this crucial Center and its services to our community and help countless individuals and families find treatment and hope.