



Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

Andy Beshear, Governor

Eric Friedlander, Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kentucky Assisted Outpatient Treatment Program Receives \$4 Million Grant

Funding will benefit 192 people with serious mental illnesses

FRANKFORT, Ky. (June 23, 2020) – The Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) received a federal commitment of \$4 million in grant funding that will enhance outpatient treatment services for people with serious mental illness (SMI).

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA), the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation, awarded the grant to fund Kentucky Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) programs in four regions of the state. AOT will serve a small SMI population in need of high-impact behavioral health services, such as people recently discharged from a psychiatric hospital who are not likely to engage voluntarily in ongoing care.

AOT is expected to serve 192 people and will be implemented in regions served by two state-owned psychiatric hospitals, Central State and Western State. This

includes counties served by the Seven Counties, Communicare, River Valley and Pennyroyal Community Mental Health Centers (CMHCs). The grant will make \$1 million available annually for four years.

“This commitment will allow the commonwealth to serve the specific needs of nearly 200 Kentuckians,” said Gov. Andy Beshear. “Across the state, our dedicated behavioral health staff are going above and beyond to ensure that these patients have access to care. This much-needed support will allow us to meet these highly complex needs.”

“This grant’s potential to help Kentuckians with a serious mental illness cannot be overstated,” said CHFS Cabinet Secretary Eric Friedlander. “While most people with SMI engage regularly in treatment and services, a small percentage does not, increasing the likelihood of homelessness, incarceration, and worsening physical, behavioral and emotional well-being. AOT will allow us to provide specialized services to this population, resulting in better health outcomes and reduced costs over time.”

Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities Commissioner Wendy Morris noted that the grant process was competitive and that CHFS is among only 17 national recipients of the award. She added that the funding will help Kentucky expand its mental health programming “in a very meaningful way. It will also allow us to advance our commitment to improving access to quality mental health care, reducing treatment gaps and empowering these individuals with mental illness.”

Sheila Schuster, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist and executive director of the Kentucky Mental Health Coalition, lauded Kentucky’s successful effort to receive SAMHSA grant funding in keeping with the mission to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America’s communities.

“Access to mental health care is a critical issue everywhere, including Kentucky,” Dr. Schuster said. “Care continuity is particularly important among the SMI population because of these individuals’ difficulties in maintaining treatment,

particularly medication. The efforts to solve these revolving door problems for Kentuckians with SMI issues have included input over the years from consumers, family members, advocates and providers. For CHFS to receive this grant funding sends a clear message: we are here for all Kentuckians, and especially for some of Kentucky's most vulnerable residents.”

Kentucky's AOT program focuses on individuals with a severe mental illness who meet criteria set forth in Tim's Law, legislation originally passed by the Kentucky General Assembly in 2017 and updated in the most recent session. It authorizes state district courts to order AOT for individuals who have been involuntarily hospitalized at least twice in the past 24 months and are unlikely to effectively maintain outpatient treatment voluntarily.

The full list of grant recipients may be found [here](#).

Learn more about SAMSHA [here](#).

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.



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