



Jefferson County – Watertown Opioid Court  
Technical Assistance Workshop: Day 1  
September 10, 2021



Office of Alcoholism and  
Substance Abuse Services



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY  
IRVING MEDICAL CENTER



Center  
for  
Court  
Innovation



New York State  
Psychiatric Institute

# Welcome and Introductions

## Facilitators:

- Sheila McCarthy, Senior Program Manager, Center for Court Innovation
- Kelly Van Develde, Senior Program Manager, Center for Court Innovation
- Carmen Alcantara, Program Manager, Center for Court Innovation
- Katherine Elkington, Associate Professor, Columbia University, New York Psychiatric Institute
- Margaret Ryan, Project Director, Columbia University, New York Psychiatric Institute
- Dennis Reilly, Statewide Drug Court Coordinator, Division of Policy and Planning
- Susan Sturges, Opioid Court Coordinator, Division of Policy and Planning

## Stakeholders:

- Hon. Anthony Neddo, Opioid Court Judge
- Jennifer Hudson Mosher, Opioid Court Coordinator
- Deborah Yuhas, Opioid Court Case Manager
- David Ladd, Assistant District Attorney
- Julie Hutchins, Public Defender
- Chief Charles Donoghue, Watertown Chief of Police
- Clarissa Godfrey, Probation
- Randi Forbes, Coordinator, Credo Community Center
- Jim Scordo, Executive Director (ret.), Credo Community Center
- Morgan McAleese, Opioid Court Clinician, Credo Community Center
- Erica Eichner, Peer, Credo Community Center



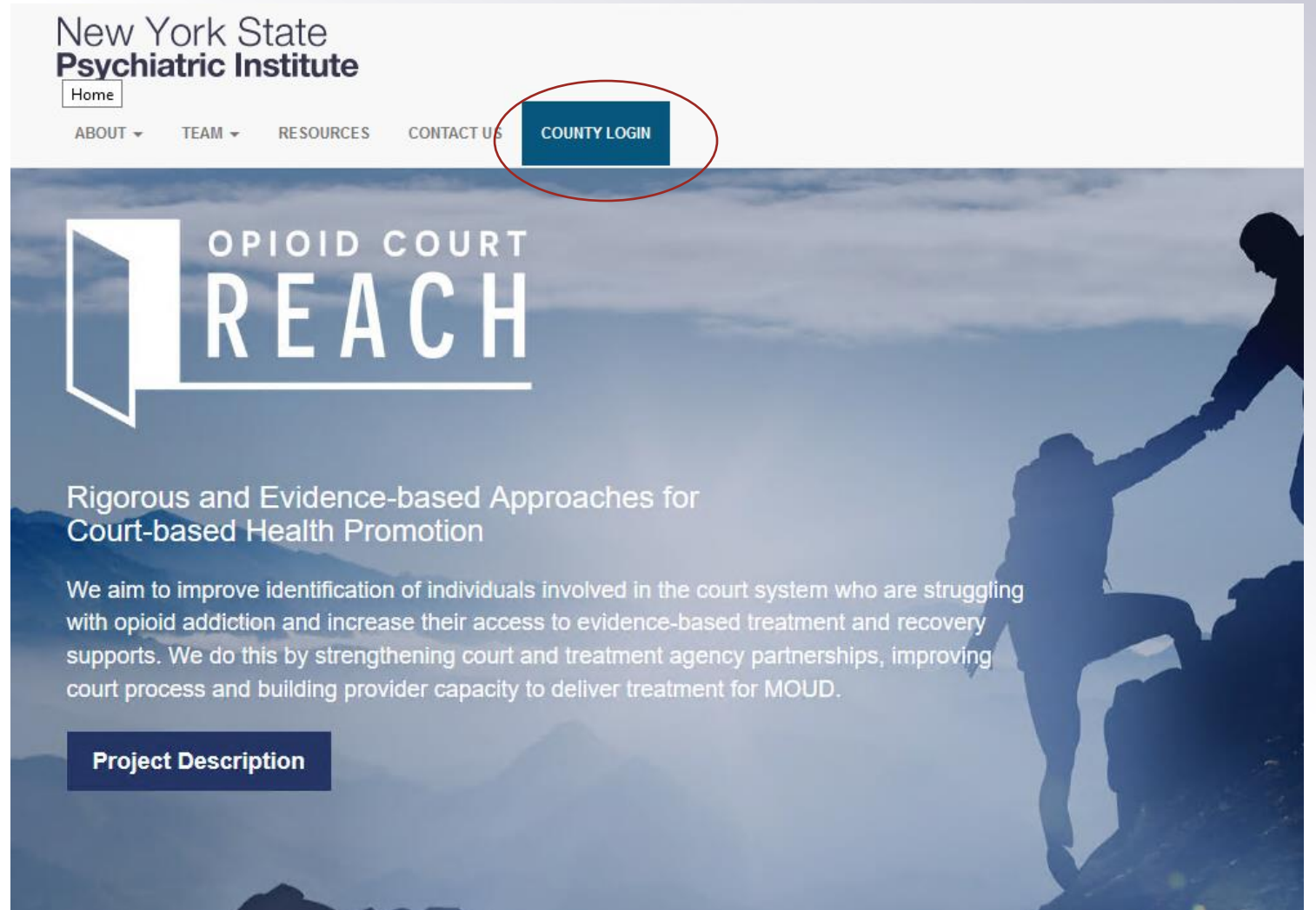
## Rigorous and Evidence-based Approaches for Court-based Health Promotion

- Project Court REACH is an implementation science research project
- Project REACH is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
- Collaboration between Columbia University/New York State Psychiatric Institute, the Center for Court Innovation, and the Office of Court Administration
- Research + training and technical assistance
- 10 opioid courts in New York
- Goal: Improve **access to treatment** and **recovery supports** for participants, and enhance **opioid court operations**

# Project Website

[projectreach.nyspi.org](https://projectreach.nyspi.org)

You have received a personalized login for your county page and resources



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## Jefferson County

### Introduction to Jefferson County Opioid Court REACH

Welcome! You are one of the 10 counties participating in Project Opioid Court REACH. This is your county's private page where you will find project materials, your county's Technical Assistance leads and contact information, and upcoming events and activities.

#### Project Resources

A directory of county-specific resources including your Needs Assessment Report, and other court and clinical resources.

[Access Project Resources](#)

#### Training Modules

[Register Here](#)

#### Technical Assistance Team

Sheila and Kelly are excited to be working with you. Feel free to contact them at the emails below if you ever have any questions.



# Training Modules

## My Courses



### JCOIN Module 1: The Opioid Crisis in Context

0% Complete  
0/1 Steps



### JCOIN Module 2: Medications for Opioid Use Disorder

0% Complete  
0/1 Steps



### JCOIN Module 3: 10 Essential Elements of Opioid Courts

0% Complete  
0/1 Steps

# Project Timeline

Phase 1: Needs Assessment



Phase 2: Targeted Enhancement Support

Phase 3: Roll-out

Phase 4: Monitoring



## The Three Questions:

1. What are we trying to accomplish?
2. What changes can we make that will result in improvement?
3. How will we know that changes result in (sustained) improvement?



What data are we using to answer these questions?



### For the Needs Assessment Report:

- Interviews with stakeholders
- Administrative surveys

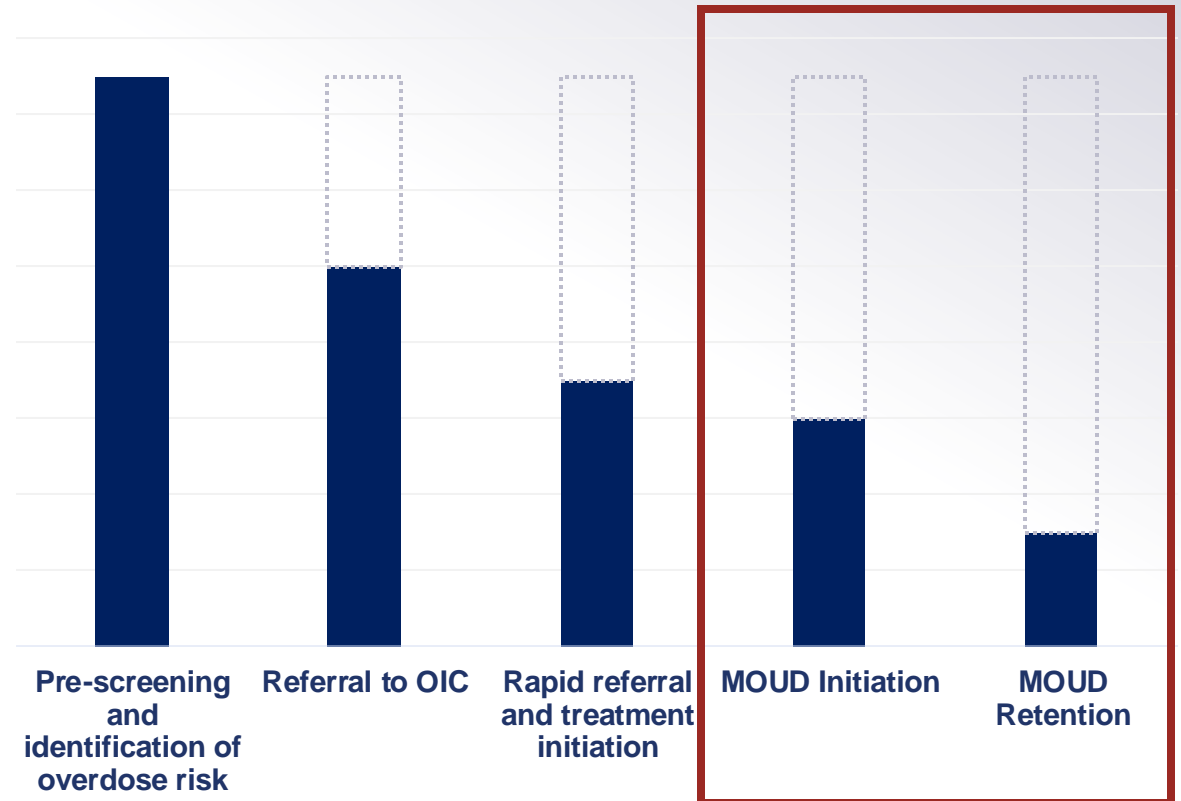
### Over the Course of the Project:

- UCMS data
- Feedback from check-in calls/future TA

We will use this data to measure court progress and support informed decision-making to **continuously improve** both court & court participant outcomes

# What are we trying to accomplish?

- Opioid Court aims to reduce opioid overdose by rapidly linking court participants to treatment where they can stabilize.
- The opioid care cascade (depicted on the right) is a way of looking to see how opioid court participants make it to treatment and where they get lost.



# What changes can we make that will result in improvement? Implementing the 10 Essential Elements.

1. Broad legal eligibility

2. Immediate screen for overdose risk

3. Informed consent after consultation with defense counsel

4. Suspension of prosecution or expedited plea during treatment

5. Rapid clinical assessment and treatment engagement

## The 10 Essential Elements of Opioid Intervention Courts



6. Recovery support services

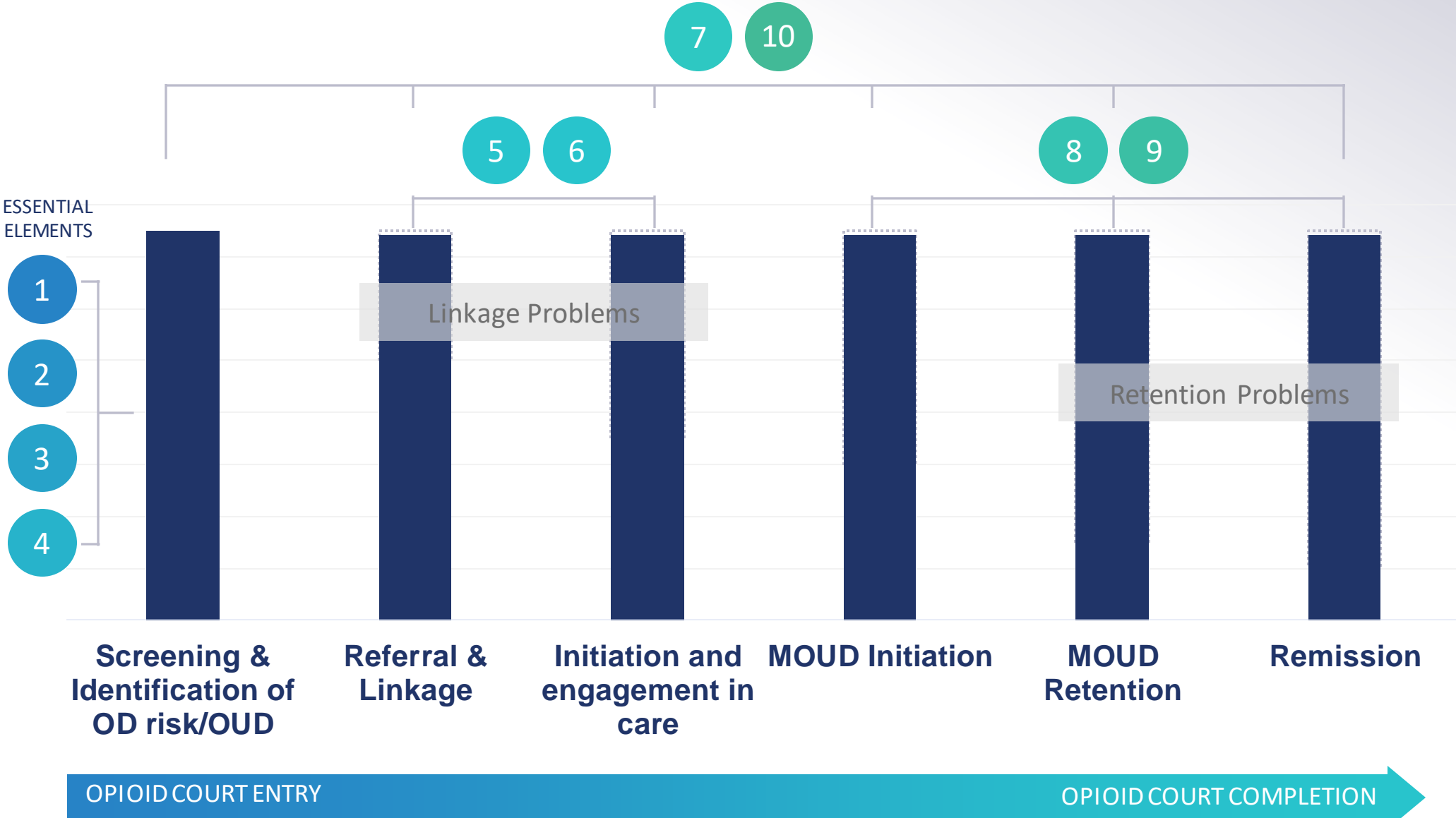
7. Frequent judicial supervision and compliance monitoring

8. Intensive case management

9. Program completion and continuing care

10. Performance evaluation and program improvement

# And how will we know that a change is an improvement?



# Snapshot of Jefferson County – Watertown Opioid Court

- The Watertown Opioid Court was established in the fall of 2019.
- A broad range of charges, including misdemeanor and felony cases, are accepted.
- Credo Community Center and Samaritan Medical Center are the primary treatment providers.
- As of the writing of the needs assessment, no participants have successfully completed the Opioid Court program.

# Needs Assessment Findings and Recommendations

# Essential Element #1: Broad Eligibility

## Findings:

- Accepts wide range of charges, except violent felonies and sexually motivated crimes;
- No written eligibility;
- Cases come from Watertown City courthouse and local town and village courts; and
- Need to bolster referral process.



# Essential Element #1: Broad Eligibility (cont'd)

## Recommendations:

- Establish clear written legal eligibility criteria;
- Consider ways to improve potential participant awareness of immediacy and availability of services related to participation in the Opioid Court;
- Create a mechanism for the transfer of cases;
- Explore the use of an opioid court bench card; and
- Engage with law enforcement representatives to increase referrals.



# Essential Element #2: Immediate Screening for Risk of Overdose

## Findings:

- No formal screening process
- All opioid court participants are assigned a Credo integrated criminal justice therapist
- Most participants are referred from probation/pre-trial services, while others are referred by the judge and attorneys at City Court
- Stakeholders could benefit from additional training
- Need for all stakeholders to understand the case flow process
- Need for informational handouts for law enforcement to distribute



## Essential Element #2: Immediate Screening for Risk of Overdose (cont'd)

### Recommendations:

- Develop formalized early identification, screening and referral protocols;
- Create a case process flow;
- Collaborate with Jefferson County Police Department to create informational handouts; and
- MOUD training for staff and court-related justice agency partners

## Essential Element #3: Informed Consent after Consultation with Defense Counsel

### Findings:

- Defense counsel is involved as representatives of clients, but not as a stakeholder;
- Defense counsel is a small referral source;
- No universal screening tool; and
- Lack of clarity among stakeholders around permissible use of information gathered in the screening tool.



## Essential Element #3: Informed Consent after Consultation with Defense Counsel (cont'd)

### Recommendations:

- Include defense counsel representation in the Watertown Opioid Court stakeholder group;
- Explore the use of a universal screening tool to identify eligible participants; and
- Create a MOU regarding permissible use of information gathered in the screening tool.

# Essential Element #4: Suspension of Prosecution or Expedited Plea

## Findings:

- Suspension of prosecution while participants are involved in the opioid court;
- Upon successful completion, a participant's case returns to its original posture;
- Participants are not penalized for not completing the program successfully; and
- Lack of clarity among stakeholders and participants around various potential case outcomes.



## Essential Element #4: Suspension of Prosecution or Expedited Plea (cont'd)

### Recommendations:

- Create a framework for potential outcomes for cases that is agreed upon and understood by all stakeholders; and
- Ensure that participants who engage in Opioid Court, but who are ultimately unsuccessful, are not penalized for their participation.

# Essential Element #5: Rapid Clinical Assessment and Treatment Engagement

## Findings:

- Assigned court staff identify individuals for consideration;
- Participants receive a comprehensive clinical assessment from a licensed treatment professional;
- Lack of clarity among stakeholders around MOUD induction procedure;
- Lack of sufficient MOUD providers; and
- Discussion of implementation of mobile/telehealth services to fill service gaps.



# Essential Element #5: Rapid Clinical Assessment and Treatment Engagement (cont'd)

## Recommendations:

- Provide ongoing training on the science of MOUD and best practices in legal settings;
- Administer NYS Treatment Screening Form to collect clinical information from participants;
- Consider participants concerns in reference to treatment decisions surrounding MOUD;
- Coordination of care and referral to be conducted by dedicated staff; and
- Expand rapid access to MOUD by establishing new partnerships.

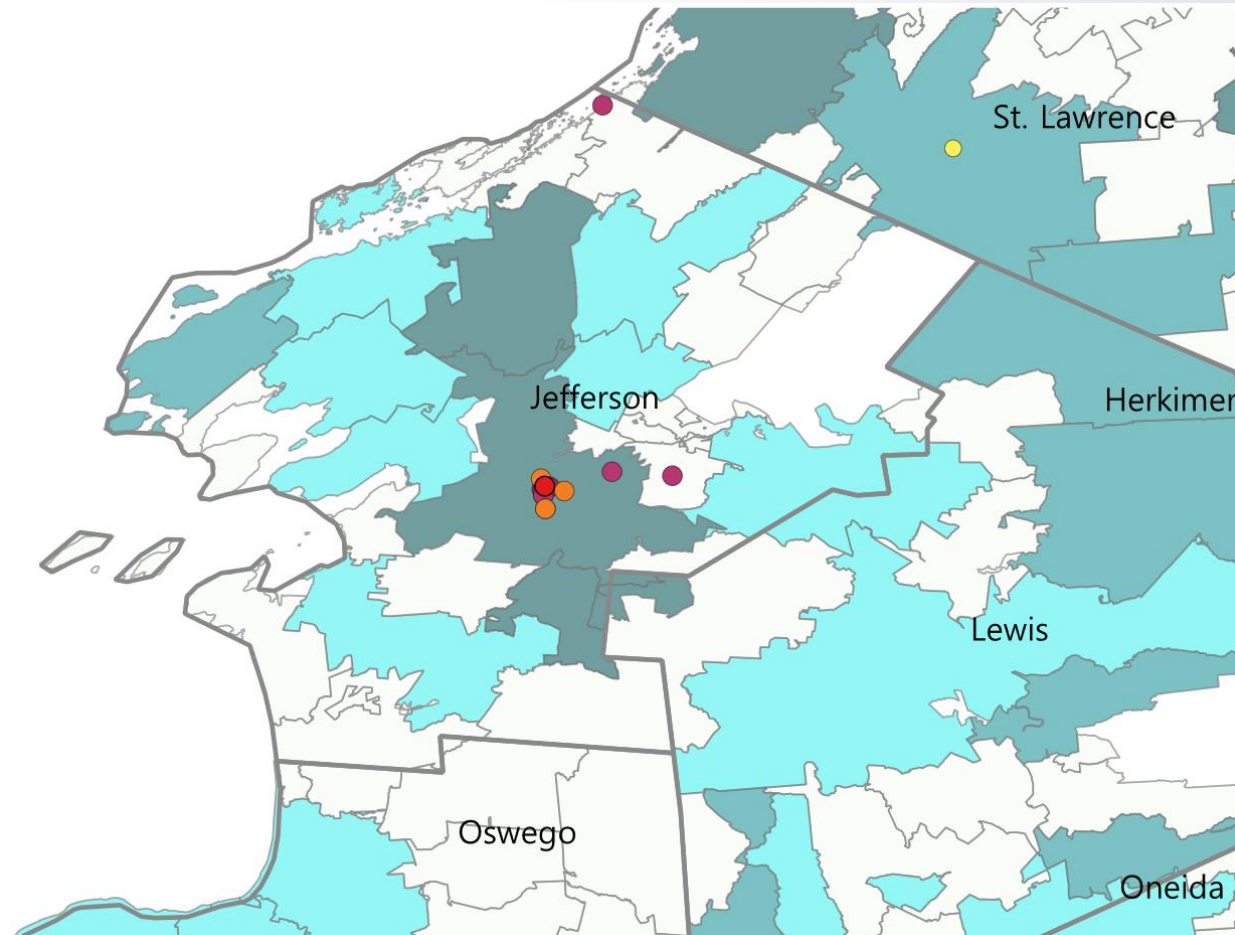


# Treatment Capacity in Jefferson County

- County Court
- Opioid Court Partner Treatment Agency
- MOUD/MAT Prescribing Agencies
- Buprenorphine-waivered providers

Opioid Burden per 100,000

- Data suppressed (numbers too small)
- Q1 & Q2: 0-242
- Q3: 242 - 388
- Q4: 388 - 2721



# Treatment Capacity in Jefferson County

As need increases as geographic reach and enrollment of the court grows, avenues for improving access:

1. Leveraging Credo's **Centers of Treatment Innovation (COTI)** capacity in the broader county
2. **Telehealth** (following an in-person visit) for court participants who do not live near providers
  - Institutional capacity and network of OASAS-certified providers
3. Investigating provider potential for **in-community services**, and/or reaching out to **buprenorphine-waivered providers** in areas of county with limited services e.g. primary care, mental health

# Essential Element #6: Recovery Support Services

## Findings:

- Opioid court has a dedicated certified peer through Credo Community Center
- Participants are connected with a peer through Anchor or NRCIL if a participant wants a different peer
- Staff from Credo, assists with general case management, housing referrals, and other recovery support needs
- Stakeholders are not familiar with all the recovery services available



## Essential Element #6: Recovery Support Services (cont'd)

### Recommendations:

- Create a framework for potential outcomes for cases; and
- Ensure that participants who engage in Opioid Court are not penalized for their participation.

# Essential Element #7: Frequent Judicial Supervision and Compliance Monitoring

## Findings:

- Due to Pandemic, appearances drastically reduced.
- Weekly Virtual Court Appearances and twice weekly case management sessions
- Drug testing is conducted at treatment facility before scheduled appearances.
- Sanctions are not utilized, detention is used for participants requiring higher level of care.



# Essential Element #7: Frequent Judicial Supervision and Compliance Monitoring (cont'd)

## Recommendations:

- Increase appearances whether virtually or in-person.
- Provide ongoing trainings and promote the continued use of motivational interviewing techniques.
- Discuss alternative measures to impose for participants that require higher level of care; and
- Schedule periodic stakeholder meetings



# Essential Element #8: Intensive Case Management

## Recommendations:

- Consider increasing participant contact with court-based case manager early in the program;
- Continue strong communication with the court and treatment provider; and
- Consider an MOU with other agencies in the community, such as transitional living services, to educate them on Opioid Court and assist with the service gaps.

# Essential Element #9: Program Completion and Continuing Care

## Findings:

- No participants have successfully completed the program.
- Credo works on continuing care plans with participants, but it has been hard to update/adapt when it is not clear when the court process will end.
- Currently no guidelines for program completion but there is strong interest in formalizing the process.
- The stakeholder group will need clarity on the difference between goals, completion, and stability within the treatment setting and court.





# Essential Element #9: Program Completion and Continuing Care (con't)

## Recommendations:

- Schedule ongoing stakeholder;
- Create a formal completion criteria checklist that includes elements of social stabilization;
- Develop an MOU to formalize how time spent in Opioid Court will count towards treatment court participation (where applicable); and
- Once program completion is determined, court staff and the clinician should jointly work together to develop a continuing care plan with participants.

# Essential Element #10: Performance Evaluation and Program Improvement

## Findings:

- From August 2019 through March 2021, the Watertown Opioid Court has 18 referred participants and 16 official participants;
- Assessment information available for only 2 out of the court's 16 accepted participants;
- Treatment initiation information available for 15 out of the 18 potential participants;
- Case closure information for 7 out of the 18 potential participants;
- 5/16 participants successfully completed at least one treatment program during court participation.
- Case closure in UCMS report 7/18 cases have been closed. 0 are listed as completed/graduated, 5 are listed as failed, and 2 are listed as loss of contact.



# Essential Element #10: Performance Evaluation and Program Improvement (con't)

## Recommendations:

- Work with Project Court REACH staff to identify areas and strategies for data entry improvement, including the use of the Opioid Court dashboard; and
- Implement recommendations from this report with the help of technical assistance from Project Court REACH

# Introduction to Action Planning

Finding:				
Goal 1:				
Objective 1A:	Action Steps	Persons Responsible	Timeline	Performance Measures
Objective 1B:	Action Steps	Persons Responsible	Timeline	Performance Measures
Objective 1C:	Action Steps	Persons Responsible	Timeline	Performance Measures

# Wrap-up and Next Steps!



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# Thank you!



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