



Onondaga County Legislature

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HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE MINUTES – MAY 17, 2022 PEGGY CHASE, CHAIR

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Kuhn, Ms. Gunnip, *Ms. Cody, Mr. Bush

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Rowley, Mr. Ryan, Mrs. Ervin; also see attached

Chair Chase called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. *A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn, seconded by Ms. Gunnip to waive the reading and approve the minutes of the previous committee meeting. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.*

Chair Chase took the agenda items out of order.

2. INFORMATIONAL: Crouse Health, Addiction Treatment Services

Ms. Taylor:

Total # of patients in treatment as of
5/1/2022 1,290

Sex

Male	709	55%
Female	581	45%

Age

19-21	4	0%
22-27	78	6%
28-35	364	28%
36-45	422	33%
46-55	216	17%
56-65	148	11%
66-75	56	4%
>75	2	0%

Race

Alaska Native	1	0%
American Indian	33	3%
Asian	2	0%
Black or African American	120	9%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2	0%
White	1048	81%
Other	84	7%

Hispanic Origin

Not of Hispanic Origin	1191	92%
Hispanic	29	2%
Puerto Rican	64	5%
Mexican	6	0%

Onondaga County total	1001	78%
City of Syracuse	562	44%
Onondaga County (excl. City of Syracuse)	439	34%
All other counties	289	22%
Cayuga	57	4%
Jefferson	20	2%
Madison	60	5%
Oneida	28	2%
Oswego	76	6%
other counties	48	4%

(13202, 13203, 13204, 13205, 13206, 13207, 13208, 13210, 13214, 13215, 13219, 13224)

Primary Substance on Admission

Alcohol	94	7%
Crack/Cocaine	15	1%
Marijuana	12	1%
All Opiates	1135	88%
Heroin	933	72%
Other Opiates	202	16%



Crouse Health's Addiction Treatment Center Expands Access to Services and Improves Patient Outcomes

BY BECCA TAURISANO

SINCE 1963, CROUSE Health has been a leader in addiction treatment services for Central New York and was the first provider in the area to offer methadone maintenance for the treatment of opioid use disorders. Now Crouse is leading the way again with a new two-story, 42,000 square-foot outpatient treatment center in Syracuse. The Bill and Sandra Pomeroy Treatment Center opened its doors in June 2021 at 2775 Erie Boulevard East and allows Crouse to expand the integration of medical services with a holistic, uplifting and healing environment that will lead to improved treatment and recovery outcomes for patients.

"One of our main goals with the new location was to expand access to services and increase outpatient capacity in a welcoming, safe and nurturing environment," says Tolani Ajagbe, MD, Medical Director

for Crouse's Addiction Treatment Services, adding that the facility's increased square footage will enable Crouse to provide treatment and recovery services for an additional 300-plus patients annually.

As the U.S. opioid crisis was exploding during the late 2010s, Crouse realized it was outgrowing its previous treatment center. Monika Taylor, Director of Addiction Treatment Services at Crouse, says, "We were bursting at the seams. It was apparent we needed a larger space to treat the needs of the community."

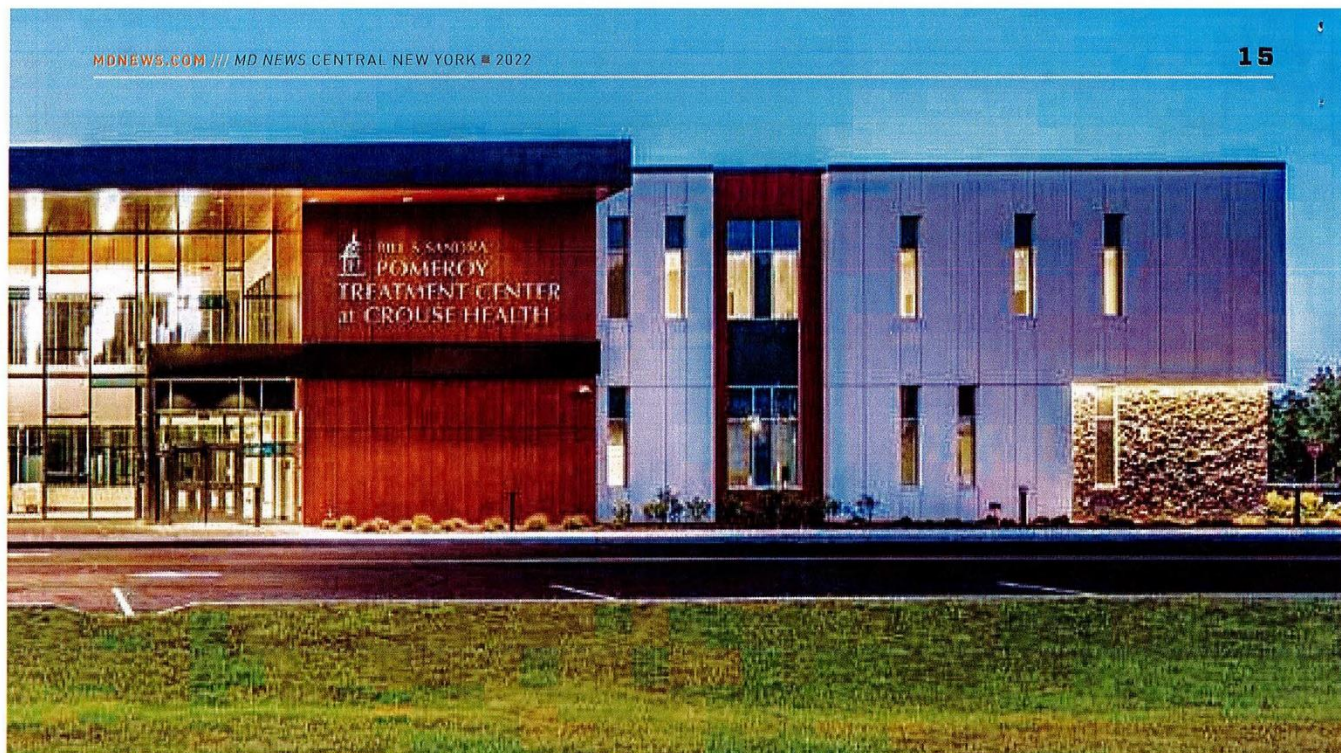
In 2017, Crouse secured funding from the New York State Department of Health to build the new center, but then it was a matter of finding a location. Despite the growing awareness surrounding the opioid crisis, there is still a stigma attached to addiction and some communities were reluctant to have a treatment center close

by. After a push to increase community awareness, the Erie Boulevard location became available and Crouse was able to build the center from the ground up, which was important to achieving their vision for the completed project. Working with architecture firm King and King, Taylor says they were able to design a space that is welcoming, fosters diversity and is free of stigma.

"The patient experience was front and center to the design," she says. "We want our patients to feel uplifted when they walk in the door. [The new center] sends a message to people that you matter. You are someone who deserves to be here."

CREATING A COMFORTABLE, SUPPORTIVE ATMOSPHERE

The Bill and Sandra Pomeroy Treatment Center incorporates unique features



that communicate a message of hope to patients. Crouse included thoughtful details in the building's design, like a glassed-in courtyard in the center of the building to let in natural light, inspirational quotes suggested by staff displayed on artwork and colorful glass windows to enhance the space.

In addition to designated areas for individual and group counseling, the center has a life skills laboratory with computers where vocational counselors can help patients with resume writing. There's also an on-site fully functional kitchen and laundry facilities. Staff can teach meal preparation and laundry skills to patients who need them, particularly for those whose substance use started at an early age. A sensory room is used for meditation or a nursing mother by dimming the lights and playing soothing music.

Activity therapists can use an outdoor courtyard for movement, and planters are available outside for patients to grow vegetables in the summer.

For patients who have lost their basic living needs due to substance use, a clothing closet is available for them to access everyday wear or business clothing for an upcoming interview. A shower room was developed after speaking with existing

patients who explained that some people seeking treatment are living on the streets and may not feel comfortable showering at a shelter.

"These features help our patients feel better about themselves," says Taylor. "It helps with their dignity."

RESPONDING TO THE PANDEMIC

At any given time, the Pomeroy Treatment Center cares for as many as 1,300 patients, with the capacity to see 300 more. Dr. Ajagbe says he is seeing an uptick in patients seeking treatment, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"COVID measures meant to keep us safe impacted addiction like isolation, high stress and economic hardship. Some people self-medicated during this time," Dr. Ajagbe says. "A direct effect was the huge spike of opioid deaths during COVID."

In 2017, there were 70,000 deaths in the United States as a result of opioid overdose and 93,000 opioid overdose deaths in 2020. In the 12-month period ending in April 2021, 100,000 people died from opioid use.

"We continue to see the effects in Onondaga County," Dr. Ajagbe says. "We lost 156 people from opioids in 2020 and

“ I want people to know when you go to Crouse you will not be judged; you will be treated with kindness and care beyond anything you'd ever expect. I have never seen anyone pour their heart and soul into this like they do. They want to see you succeed.”

— GREG COLLINS, POMEROY TREATMENT CENTER PATIENT RECOVERING FROM ADDICTION

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MD NEWS



2021 is on pace to be higher than that. More people are trying to access care every day.”

About 50% of the patients at the Pomeroy Treatment Center are being treated for opioid use and the other 50% are seeking help for addictions to alcohol, marijuana, crack cocaine and other substances.

Dr. Ajagbe says the patients that come to the treatment center now are medically sicker, largely due to fentanyl and other substances used in drugs today. Some are also suffering from mental health issues, another side effect of the pandemic.

“We are seeing an increase in mental health issues — depression, anxiety, PTSD, trauma — because of lack of interpersonal interactions,” he says. “The substances people are using are spiked with synthetics and fentanyl that are causing damage in the brain and mental health.”

The Pomeroy Treatment Center can usually address all of their patient’s health issues in one location, whether they need medication to support treatment such as methadone, suboxone or vivitrol, medical treatment from their providers on staff, or mental health treatment.

“If a patient has a cough or sore throat, they can be seen by our medical staff,” Taylor says. “Some patients may not have a primary care provider or their doctor may be treating them differently because of their addiction. Being able to address those issues here is a plus to their overall treatment outcomes.”

Part of the mission of the Pomeroy Treatment Center is to destigmatize addiction.

“A large part of our population worldwide still sees addiction as a moral failure, rather than a chronic disease of the brain,” Dr. Ajagbe says. “Addiction is no different than other chronic diseases like hypertension, diabetes, asthma, Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, etc. They go through periods of remission and periods where they relapse. Our responsibility is to help them stabilize again.”

Dr. Ajagbe says only 10% to 12% of people with substance use disorders are in treatment and the rest are either unable to admit they need help or do not know how to access care. Dr. Ajagbe believes education about addiction is key, as well as providing 24/7 access to individuals seeking treatment. ■

The Pomeroy Treatment Center is open seven days a week: Monday through Thursday, 7:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.; Friday, 5:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; Saturday/Sunday, 7–10 a.m.



Crouse Health's Addiction Treatment Services

Serving CNY Since 1963

Programs

Crouse Health's Addiction Treatment Services has been helping individuals and families take back their lives and experience a fresh start, free from drugs and alcohol since 1963.

Opioid Treatment Program

- Medication assisted treatment (Methadone, Suboxone and Vivitrol)
- Individual and group therapy and education

Adult Programs

Hospital-based

- Addiction Medicine consult
- Planning and referral for continued treatment
- Certified Recovery Peer Advocates available to all Crouse patients with Substance Use Disorder
- Suboxone provided in the Emergency Department, along with transition to ongoing care

Inpatient Rehabilitation

- Residential care at Commonwealth Place
- Medical and biopsychosocial assessment
- Structured treatment planning
- Daily therapy and education
- Aftercare arrangements

Outpatient Clinic Programs

Older Adults Recovery Service

- Intensive program for adults over 50
- Meets three days a week
- Continuing care group

Women's Program

- Individual, group and intensive program
- Pregnant and postpartum services
- Works with local medical and social services

HYPE – Healthy Young People Excel

- Designed for young men 18 to 27
- Individual, group and intensive program

Day Treatment

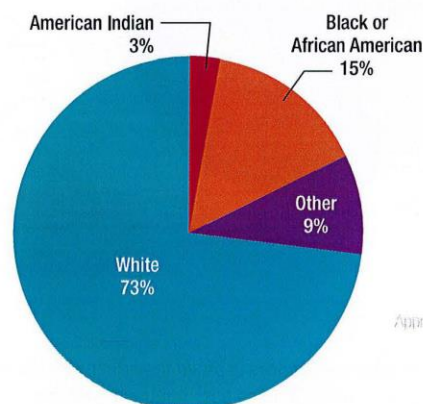
- Meets five times a week
- Individual, group and family therapy
- Activities of daily living therapy

Structured Outpatient Programs

- Meets three times a week
- Mornings and evenings available

All our programs provide patients with access to certified recovery peer advocates, a vocational counselor and addiction psychiatrist as part of their comprehensive treatment.

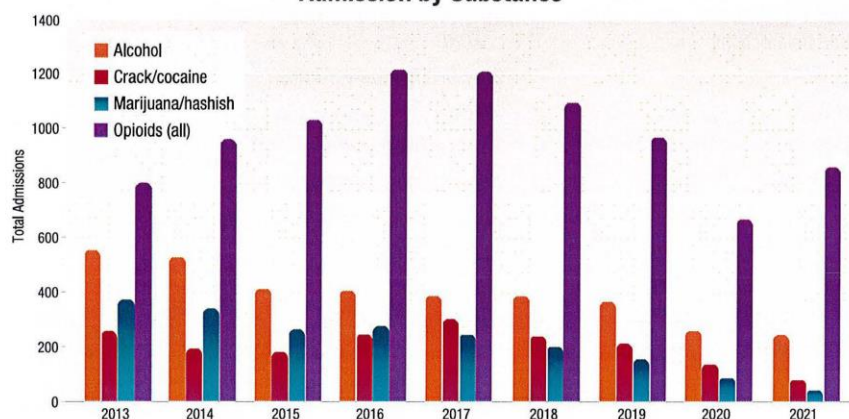
Number of Patient Service Visits 2015-2021



Diversity of Patients 2021

Approximately 5% of patients identify as LGBTQ

Admission by Substance

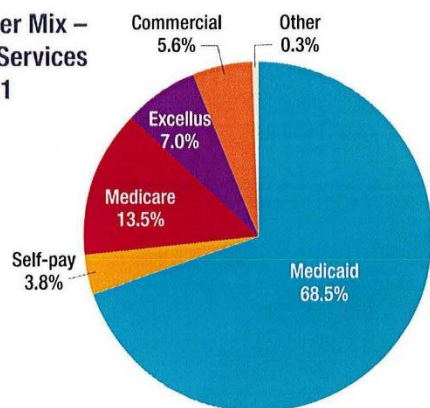


Opening a New Door to Addiction Treatment Services

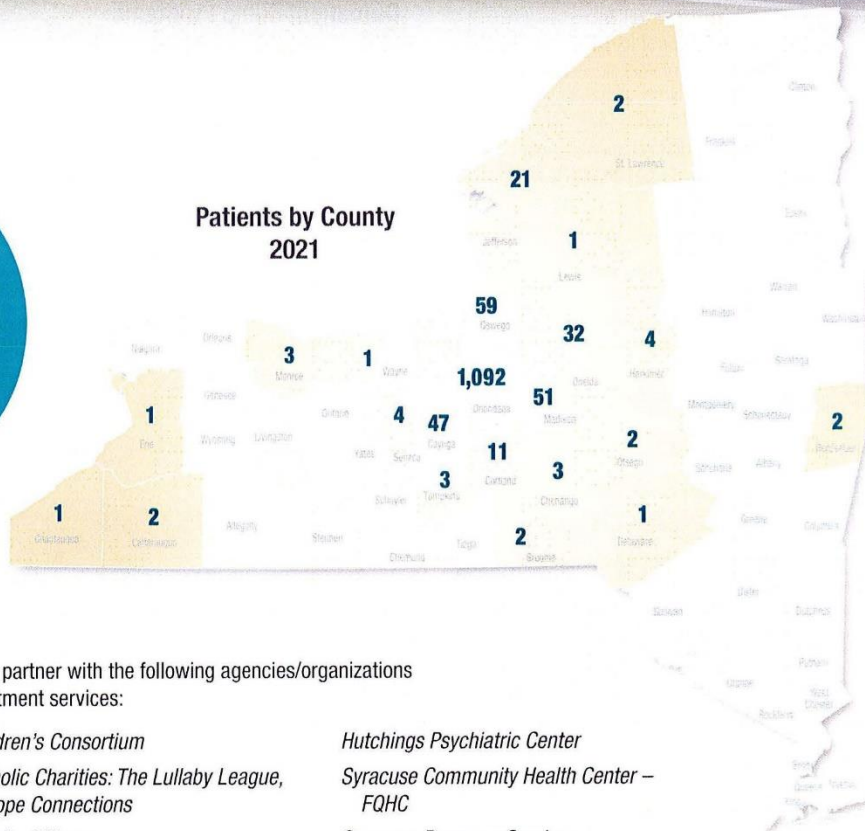
Crouse Health has provided exceptional outpatient care and services to people struggling with substance use disorder since 1963. We are proud of our new facility that matches the caliber of our staff and provides a safe, nurturing and uplifting environment: The Bill & Sandra Pomeroy Treatment Center at Crouse Health, located at 2775 Erie Blvd. East in Syracuse.



Payer Mix – All Services 2021



Patients by County 2021



Ms. Kuhn asked if the staff they have at the emergency room would redirect someone to a program if they are not admitted. Ms. Taylor:

- Yes; social worker will help facilitate connecting someone to addiction treatment, if needed; if individual has identified needing a medication, the emergency room prescriber can start them there, then connect to services
- No waiting list; used to have waitlist a few years ago of over 500 patients in 2015; would take 9-12 months for someone's name to come up, and during that wait, the person may have passed from overdose
- Have same day access hours, Mon – Fri from 7:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.; do assessment and need of medication, can start same day, or within couple days; would not let them leave without meds (Methadone and Suboxone)

Ms. Taylor responded to Chair Chase that many people do not do well with Vivitrol for an opioid use disorder. It is more successful for alcohol use disorder.

Ms. Gunnip asked how many people come back, and how many times do they come back before they are successful. Ms. Taylor:

- Do not know, do not have exact numbers, but do know it happens; increase in individuals that start, stay for a week, disappear, then restart; sometimes takes a few times to commit to treatment, which is much better than waitlist
- Success rate is low; probably 25-30%; compared to other illnesses (i.e. heart disease, diabetes) relapse rates are similar

Ms. Taylor replied to Mr. Bush that they offer Medicaid, Medicare, private insurance, etc. (*chart on previous page*).

Mr. Bush asked about the outreach in the county. Ms. Taylor:

- Person comes in to do assessment; if person can benefit from outpatient treatment, will start that first at clinic
- Do Telehealth services due to COVID; have some patients in person, some join remotely; most patients opted in person
- Typically people have to find their way into the city; do participate in community events to talk about services available
- No outreach in schools; participated pre-COVID at health fairs

Chair Chase asked how many inpatient beds total in the county, and Ms. Taylor replied that she does not know. Helio changed some of their halfway houses into 820 programs, where it is a step down from inpatient, and they have 40 beds.

Chair Chase asked if inpatient is a good start. Ms. Taylor:

- Yes, for many people; many patients have both opioid use disorder and drug history; have to manage withdrawal first
- Inpatient – when it comes to those with Medicare, impossible to get reasonable length of stay; after 3 days, Medicare will not approve further days; already involves having conversation with physician; would love improvements
- Hard to get someone in; some cannot wait for inpatient treatment; need easier access
- Would like to have place for patients to be supported until a bed is available

Ms. Kuhn asked about centralized intake for all services. Ms. Taylor:

- Not sure if crisis center idea meant for the community; not sure how it would work
- Would make more sense to approach as McMahon/Ryan Child Advocacy Center – separate entity, non-profit runs it, and different community partners come in to provide services; would be better collaboration

Ms. Kuhn asked if there is any consideration for satellites in rural areas. Ms. Taylor:

- OASAS had couple RFPs out: (1) Mobile units, Helio got awarded 2 of those; (2) OASAS has ability to allow for satellite, but did not apply due to staffing issues

Mr. Ryan asked if the treatment facility in Pennsylvania is doing something Onondaga County is not. Ms. Taylor:

- Big facility with ~70-80 beds; must be staffed to admit in evenings; could also be with regularity requirements; PA required workup may be different compared to OASAS in NY; do not know for a fact; would have to research
- Between Helio and Crouse, probably have the same amount of beds as facility in PA; not enough for community; some people go outside; some individuals go to Conifer Park inpatient facility in Albany

1. HEALTH: Michelle Mignano, Deputy Commissioner**a. Amending the 2022 Onondaga County Budget in Connection With Opioid Settlement Funds (\$3,771,991)**

- Provided information and joined lawsuit against large pharmaceutical manufacturers that did not have certain controls
- This is first payment from 3 manufacturers; expect more money coming in
- Simply asking to accept first payment, put in project, details for disbursement to be worked out over next few months
- Expectations about what funds could be used for; tremendous strain on all departments and community members
- Have opioid program; great fortune of getting CDC fellow; amazing at getting grant; working on getting in community and helping people; well positioned to start work
- Legislature will be kept abreast of the ideas; how disbursed; Health Department will be apprising community as well
- Impacts many people; want to talk about how they are trying to help community; cannot imagine will not share

Ms. Kuhn asked if they began conversations, and who is involved. Ms. Mignano:

- Yes; conversations with County Executive's office; have Drug Task Force and own program in Health
- There will be significant ideas of what is needed the most; group working every day
- Knew the money was coming, but not amount, which changes the scope
- How long will it last? Do they expect more? What is maintainable?
- Great ideas of lobbying for insurances; many facets of what will help the community
- Do not know how the money will be spent, but have ideas; chance to hear from County Executive
- Helio, Upstate, Crouse – part of Drug Task Force; Helio and Crouse are also getting money
- Take into account the perspective of all the money, and what efforts are being done; do not want to saturate one aspect
- i.e. Maybe will be advocacy group or provide funding to make pilot work at federal or state level
- Money will be carried over in their budget via a project account
- Money being accepted is from 3 pharmaceutical companies; expect more as there were quite a few pharmaceutical companies who were not conforming to standards with their distribution; will be additional funds

A motion was made by Ms. Cody, seconded by Ms. Gunnip, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn, seconded by Ms. Gunnip, to adjourn the meeting. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



JAMIE McNAMARA, Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**
DATE: **MAY 17, 2022**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Kate Felka	Law Dept
John Tejada	Comptroller's
Michelle Mignano	Health
Martha Ryan	Community member
Monika Taylor	Crouse Addiction Treatment
Teneshia Murphy	CE Office