



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie: State Budget Brings More Heroin and Opioid Counseling Services Into Jefferson County Jail

Brian Dwyer

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ISSUE:

- [drug addiction](#)
- [Addiction Prevention Counseling and Education](#)



State Senator Patty Ritchie, a member of the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, is announcing the New York State Budget includes \$156,000 for the Jefferson County Jail to expand and add drug-counseling services for inmates.

Through a pilot program announced Tuesday, 16 county jails across the state—including Jefferson—will be provided with funding for assessment, education and counseling services, along with peer support and discharge planning services, which will not only help people continue their path to recovery outside of jail, but cut down on arrest costs, court costs, jail costs and more.

“Incarceration alone does not deter a drug user from falling back on bad habits once they are released. As street drugs continue to get stronger, recently-released inmates are also much more likely to overdose as their body’s tolerance has lowered significantly,” Senator Ritchie said. “By expanding and providing additional counseling services inside of the Jefferson County Jail, we can help even more people addicted to opioids and heroin lead a healthier lifestyle—including after their release—and we can create a much safer environment for those who work inside our jails.”

Studies show that more than half of the inmates in county jails across the state are struggling with addiction and addicts have a 75 percent chance of relapsing. In Jefferson County alone, there have been 129 overdose deaths in the last seven years. Drug addiction has also led to an increased number of people released from

jail ending up right back behind bars on new drug charges.

The Jefferson County Jail currently offers a couple of successful counseling programs through Jefferson County Community Services and the Children's Home of Jefferson County. This funding will allow the county to hire more counselors, purchase equipment for counseling services and train officers in drug counseling.

"We all know the power of addiction. We need to do everything we can to ensure those who spend time in our jail because of drug addiction, have the chance to live a healthier lives upon their release and don't fall back into the deadly, dangerous habits that threaten the safety of our communities," said Jefferson County Sheriff Colleen O'Neill said. "I want to thank Senator Ritchie and the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction for recognizing this significant issue and coming up with intelligent ways to help those in need."

Once through the pilot phase, the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction plans to push for counseling service funding for every county in New York State.