



NEWS RELEASE

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MAHEC receives \$1M to expand treatment capacity for opioid use disorder in NC

Funding supports development of regional addiction medicine hubs and community-based treatment

(Asheville, N.C. – March 31, 2020) —This month, Asheville-based [UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC](#) received more than \$1 million to expand access to treatment for opioid use disorder through the development of two regional addiction medicine hubs and office-based opioid treatment services at community-based health centers across North Carolina.

This two-year grant is a collaboration between the Mountain Area Health Education Center and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine that will improve access to lifesaving care particularly for underserved and vulnerable populations. The national [Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts](#), FORE, and Western North Carolina-based [Dogwood Health Trust](#) are funding this work to support scalable solutions to the opioid crisis. In 2018, an estimated 130 Americans died every day from an opioid overdose, and an estimated 2 million people are currently experiencing opioid use disorder.

“FORE and Dogwood Health Trust have made it possible for MAHEC and the University of North Carolina to expand access to evidence-based treatment for individuals who are at greatest risk for overdose—those living in rural communities and those without health insurance,” explains Jeffery E. Heck, MD, CEO of MAHEC. “We are confident this work will save many lives.”

Regional addiction medicine programs based at MAHEC in Asheville and UNC-Chapel Hill will provide education, training, and technical assistance to expand office-based opioid treatment services at up to 10 community-based health centers, health departments, and free clinics across the state. The regional hubs will also provide care management, telehealth, and peer support services for individuals with more complicated substance use or co-occurring disorders who could benefit from additional medical expertise and coordinated care.

“We piloted a hub-and-spoke model offering enhanced services for addiction treatment at our UNC-Chapel Hill hub and identifying community clinics to serve as spokes who provide maintenance addiction treatment for stabilized patients,” shares Robyn Jordan, MD, PhD, principle investigator at UNC. “This approach allowed us to expand our addiction treatment capacity and accept referrals from hospitals and emergency departments. The new grant allows us to expand this model to other locations in the state.”

MAHEC, working with UNC-Chapel Hill, is one of FORE’s 19 inaugural grantees nationwide.

“Opioid use disorder has affected every community across North Carolina, but certain groups face significant and persistent barriers to treatment including the uninsured, pregnant and parenting women, minorities, those living in rural communities, and people involved with the justice system,” explains Shuchin Shukla, MD, MPH, principal investigator at MAHEC. “This grant will enable us to train medical providers across North Carolina to deliver effective life-saving treatment for those suffering with opioid use disorder, no matter their location or circumstance.”

Education, training, and technical assistance to support the community-based delivery of medication-assisted treatment will be provided at no cost to eligible organizations.

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Mountain Area Health Education Center

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About MAHEC

The [Mountain Area Health Education Center](#) was established in 1974 and is a leader in healthcare, education, and innovation. MAHEC is one of nine centers in the NC AHEC Program and serves the western 16 counties in North Carolina. The NC AHEC Program provides and supports educational activities and services with a focus on primary care in rural communities and those with less access to resources to recruit, train, and retain the workforce needed to create a healthy North Carolina. MAHEC's Asheville campus is also home to UNC Health Sciences at MAHEC, an academic health center in partnership with UNC-Chapel Hill that includes programs from the UNC School of Medicine, UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, and UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy.

About UNC School of Medicine

[UNC School of Medicine](#) is the state's largest medical school graduating approximately 180 new physicians each year. It is consistently ranked among the top medical schools in the U.S., including 1st overall for primary care by US News & World Report, and 6th for research among public universities. More than half of the school's 1,700 faculty members served as principal investigators on active research awards in 2017. Two UNC SOM faculty members have earned Nobel Prize awards.

About FORE

The [Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts](#) was founded in 2018 as a private 501(c)(3) national, grant-making foundation focused on addressing the nation's opioid crisis. FORE is committed to funding a diversity of projects contributing solutions to the crisis at national, state, and community levels. FORE's mission is to convene and support partners advancing patient-centered, innovative, evidence-based solutions impacting people experiencing opioid use disorder, their families, and their communities.

About Dogwood Health Trust

The [Dogwood Health Trust](#) is a North Carolina nonprofit corporation with the sole purpose of dramatically improving the health and well-being of all people and communities of Western North Carolina. Dogwood Health Trust became operational upon the sale of Mission Health's assets to HCA Healthcare and is the recipient of the net proceeds of the sale.

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