

Treatment center expanding to offer more detox

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CINCINNATI (Sydney Benter) -- A weapon in the Tri-State's battle against the heroin epidemic is getting some extra firepower.

The largest detox facility in the area announced plans to expand Tuesday, August 11. The Center for Addiction Treatment (CAT) has been a go-to addiction treatment facility for more than four decades and until recently it was able to keep up with demand.

"People are still drinking, they're still using pot, but what they're coming in to treatment for is the opiate addiction," said Sandi Kuehn, CAT president and CEO.

She said emergency room data showed that Hamilton County ranked number 2 in the state for the highest rate of residents diagnosed with opiate abuse, dependence or poisoning at ER discharge. Brian is a CAT patient from Chicago. The facility asked that Local 12 News not use his full name. He's been sober for 13 days after 17 years of addiction. Heroin wasn't his drug of choice, but he knew he was in the minority.

"I've never heard about heroin so much in the news and I've never seen so much heroin use in my life since I've been out here," he said.

In 2014, 79 percent of the patients treated at CAT were addicted to heroin or opiates, compared to 10 percent in 2000. The treatment center is completely voluntary and is in high demand.

"I tell people it's easier to get out than get in, mostly because of capacity issues," said Kuehn.

The facility is unique in that it's the only medical detox facility outside of a hospital within 180 miles of Cincinnati.

"On any given day, maybe 300 to 400 people that are in need of treatment, but there's only about 50 beds total [for detox] in the entire county," said Nancy Blamer, CAT development manager

That deficit was why CAT wanted to build a second complex on the property to offer detox treatment to another 1,000 people every year. Brian said the program at CAT was different than others he had been through, which was why he's had success this time.

"I know that without a doubt I plan on living my life free, and this program has definitely helped me. It has [a] science base, it has a spiritual base, and I really appreciate that."

"Our mission is to save lives and rebuild families, so the expansion is going to help us save more lives and rebuild more families," said Blamer.

The new outpatient facility will cost \$3.7 million. The City of Cincinnati has pledged money toward the project and the treatment center is looking into grant money from the state. If all goes according to plan construction could start summer 2016.