

Comprehensive MAT for Opioid Use Disorder: Holistic Approach in St. Louis County Jail

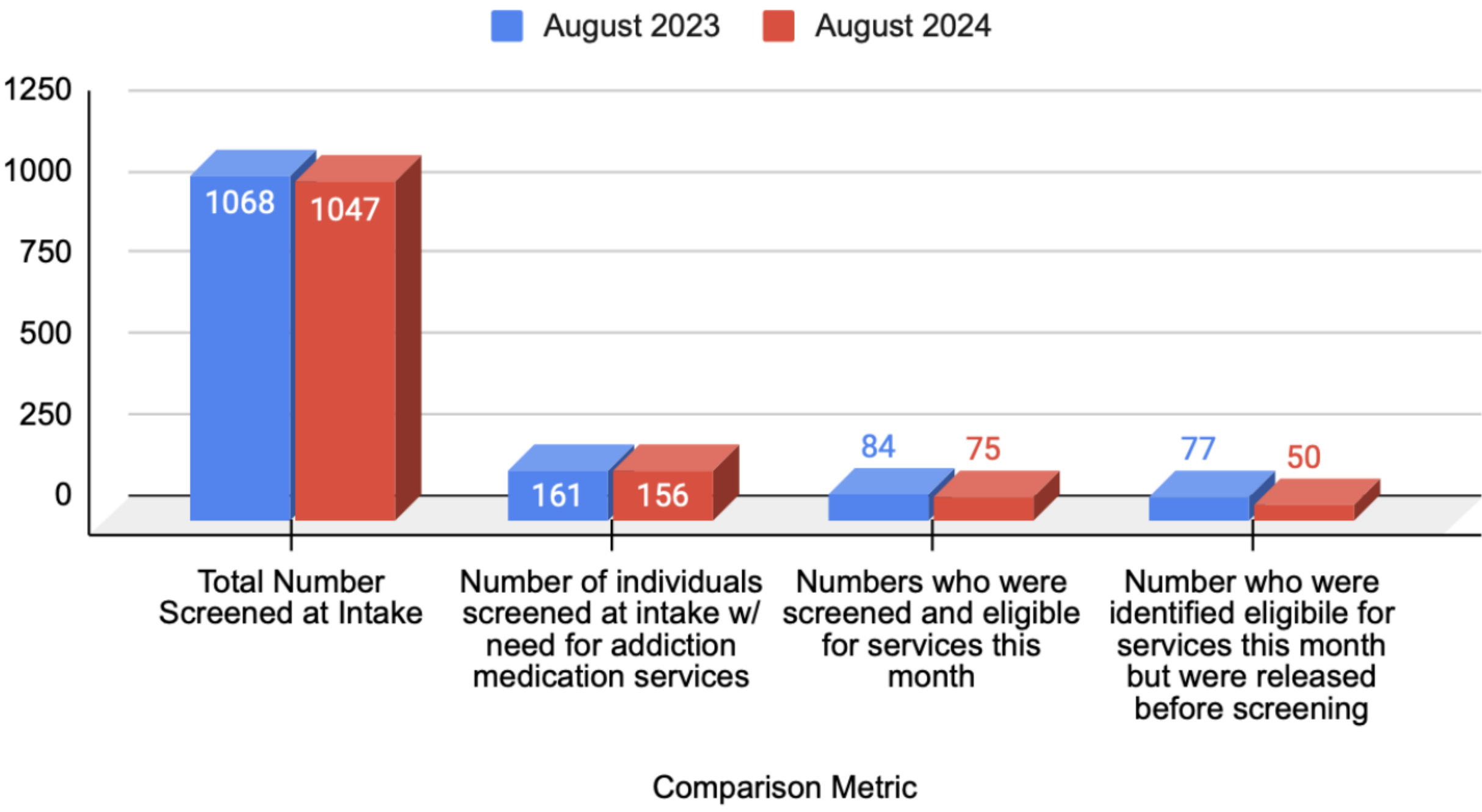
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Overview

The Buzz Westfall Justice Center is the jail in Saint Louis County, MO, housing approximately 1300 individuals. In collaboration with the Saint Louis County Department of Public Health, Corrections Medicine employs a comprehensive Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program to address opioid use disorder (OUD) among detainees. As of March 2025, 107 individuals were enrolled in the program. This evidence-based intervention integrates pharmacological and behavioral approaches to support patients by reducing withdrawal symptoms and opioid cravings, with the aim to reduce short term mortality, and promote long-term recovery.

Comparison of Screening & Intake (Aug 2023 vs. Aug 2024)



Comparison of screening and intake metrics for August 2023 and August 2024. Despite a slight decrease in total screenings, August 2024 shows improvements in efficiency, with a lower number of individuals released before screening and a more streamlined identification of those eligible for MAT.

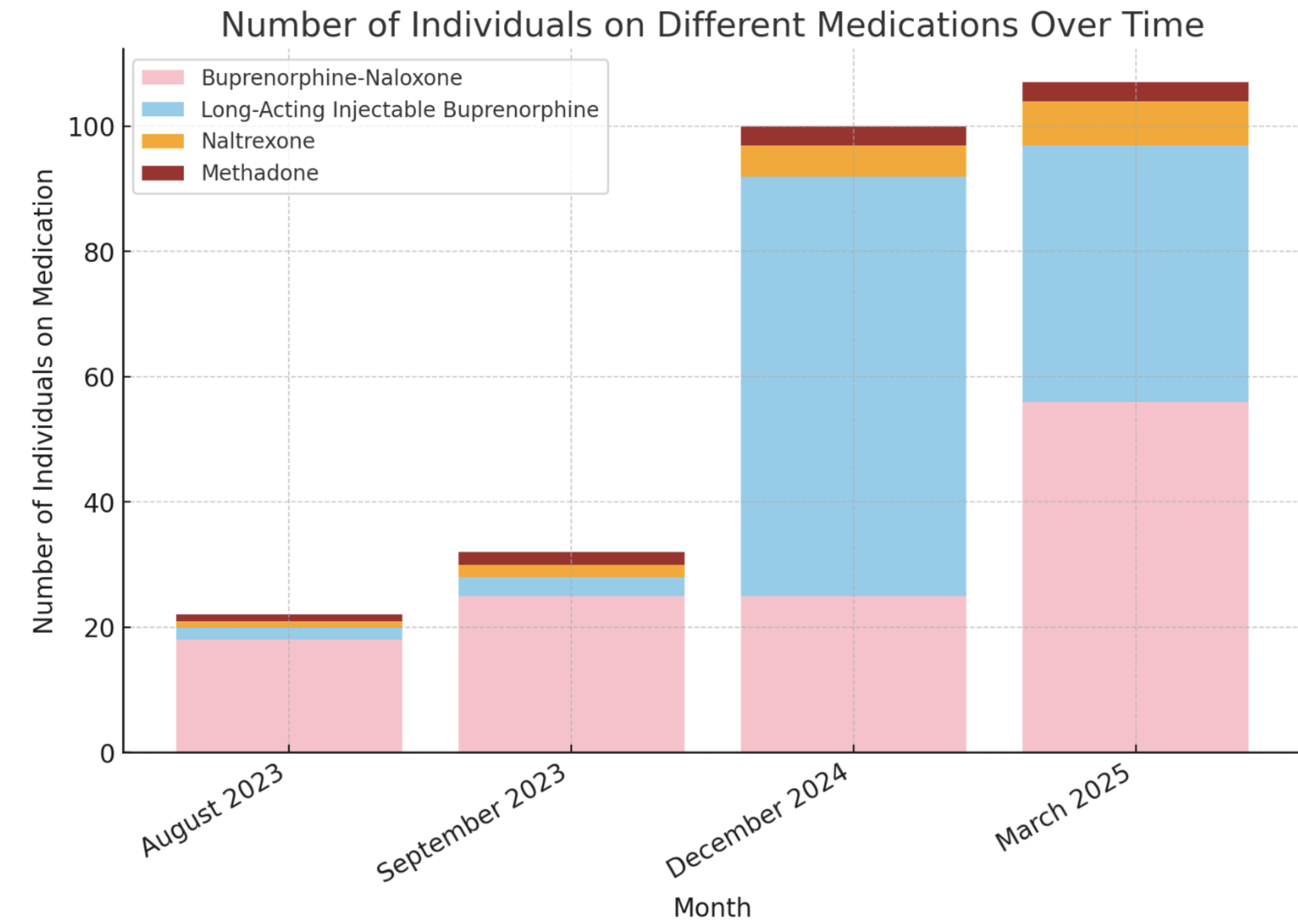
Treatment Protocols and Medication Management

Once referred to the MAT program, patients are evaluated by a medical provider, who assesses their clinical history, drug use patterns, OUD treatment history, and treatment readiness. Based on this evaluation, pharmacotherapy is initiated, with discussion of options including buprenorphine-naloxone for initiation of treatment, and long-acting injectable buprenorphine for long-term management. Patients are re-evaluated one week after initiation of treatment, and follow-up visits are scheduled monthly to ensure therapeutic efficacy and adherence to treatment plan, and address any concerns or side effects

Medication and Treatment Strategies

The program has moved to a primary workflow of buprenorphine-naloxone for 7-10 days, followed by a transition to a monthly long-acting injectable buprenorphine injection. The security requirements and nursing workflow allow for a once-daily MAT med pass, unlike the two- to three-times-per-day dosing found in the community. This daily dosing leads to peaks and troughs in medication levels, rather than a smooth, continuous release, which is less effective for many patients. On the staffing side, the monthly injection is more efficient than an everyday medication pass and is subject to fewer security concerns. The monthly injection program has significantly reduced manpower requirements for nursing and corrections, enabling more patients to access treatment while improving operational efficiency and safety.

Any patients established with an Opioid Treatment Program for methadone treatment will have doses verified and continued. Patients currently maintained on or specifically requesting naltrexone will receive oral naltrexone daily, and a long-acting injection prior to release. This comprehensive approach ensures continuity of care while minimizing medication diversion risks and reducing the logistical burden of daily dosing. The program’s structured transitions from buprenorphine-naloxone to long-acting buprenorphine or naltrexone also help in stabilizing patients, improving adherence, and reducing relapse rates within the jail setting and post-release.

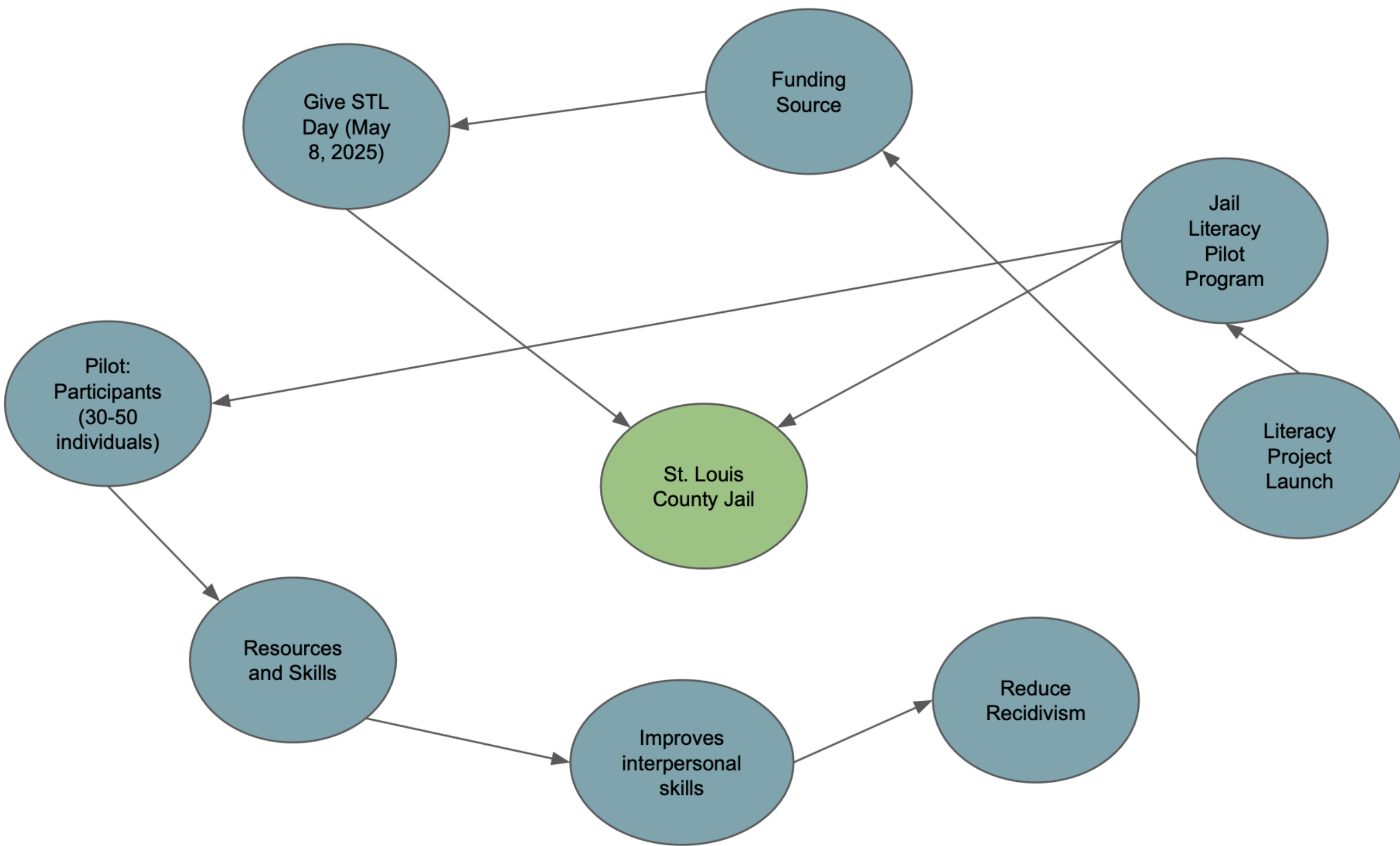


The graph shows the number of individuals on different medications for opioid use disorder from August 2023 to March 2025. There is a notable shift in medication trends, with long-acting injectable buprenorphine usage increasing significantly by December 2024 and remaining high in early 2025. buprenorphine-naloxone usage fluctuates, peaking in March 2025, while naltrexone and methadone remain relatively stable with minor increases over time. Compared to earlier data, the total number of individuals on medication has grown substantially, reflecting an expanding adoption of treatment options, particularly long-acting injectables.

Health Literacy Project

The Jail Literacy Project aims to empower incarcerated individuals by providing them with essential literacy skills that serve as a foundation for rehabilitation and future success. By improving reading and writing abilities, the project seeks to enhance participants' education, increase employability, and reduce recidivism. Through targeted educational resources and support, the program strives to build brighter futures for individuals, helping them reintegrate into society with the tools they need to thrive.

Network Map of Literacy Project and Partnership



Current Challenges

The high cost of long-acting injectable medications, often exceeding \$1,500 per monthly dose, poses a major financial challenge for jails and prisons trying to implement Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT). Medicaid’s inmate exclusion policy further complicates access, as benefits are terminated upon incarceration, leaving correctional facilities without a sustainable funding source. While some states have secured Medicaid 1115 waivers to cover limited pre-release care, access remains inconsistent, creating gaps in treatment and increasing overdose risks post-release. Additionally, pharmacy assistance programs frequently exclude justice-involved individuals, particularly those with co-existing conditions, failing to recognize their need for both treatment and financial support.

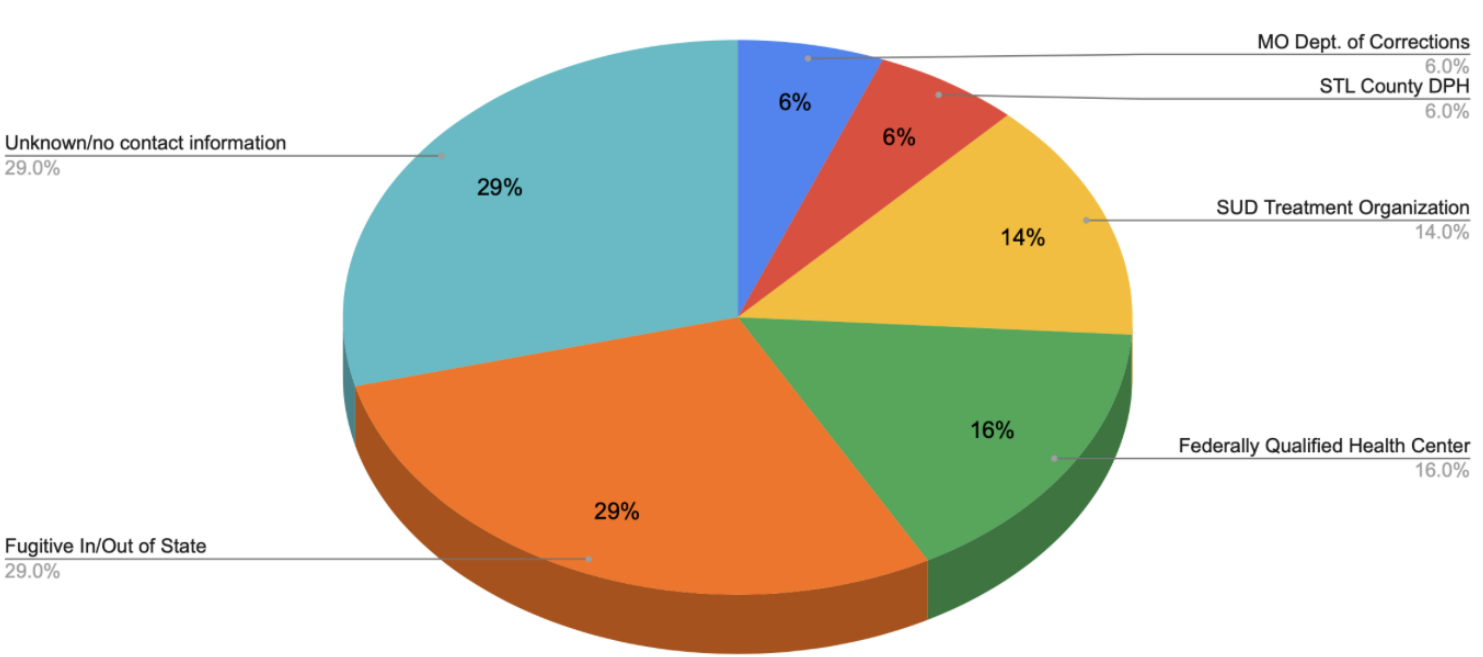
Key challenges include:

- Inconsistent state-level access:** Only a handful of states have Medicaid 1115 waivers, creating patchwork coverage for MAT.
- Overdose risks post-release:** Gaps in Medicaid coverage during incarceration delay MAT re-initiation, increasing the risk of overdose.
- Exclusion from pharmacy assistance programs:** Justice-involved individuals with co-occurring conditions often face barriers to financial support.
- Disrupted continuity of care:** Medicaid’s inmate exclusion policy interrupts long-term treatment plans, complicating reintegration efforts.

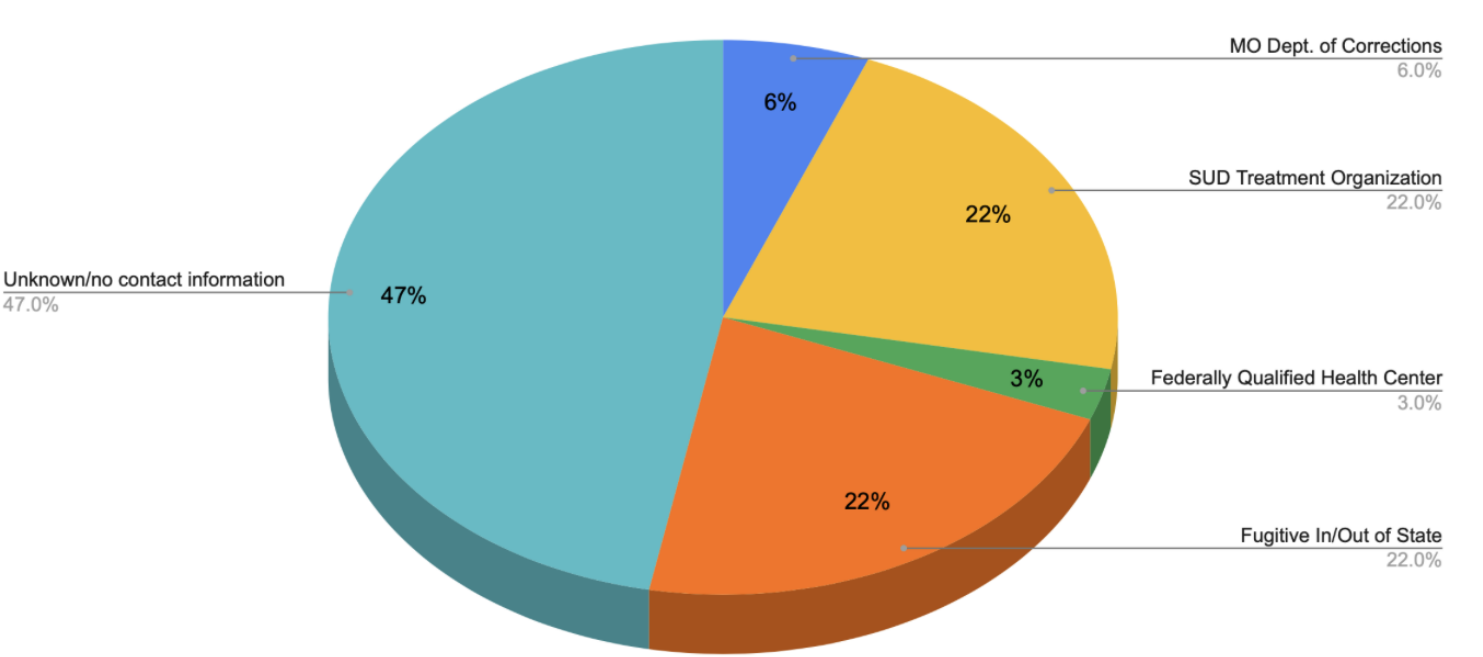
Discharge Planning and Continuity of Care

The MAT discharge planner plays a critical role in bridging in-custody care with community-based resources. Upon release, the planner alerts the medical provider who orders bridge prescriptions from a local pharmacy that delivers to the address of the patients choosing, eliminating transportation barriers, ensuring that medications are available immediately post-release. The planner also assists with court appearances and facilitates connections to outpatient treatment facilities, social services, and peer support networks.

Discharge Outcomes of Individuals (April 2024)

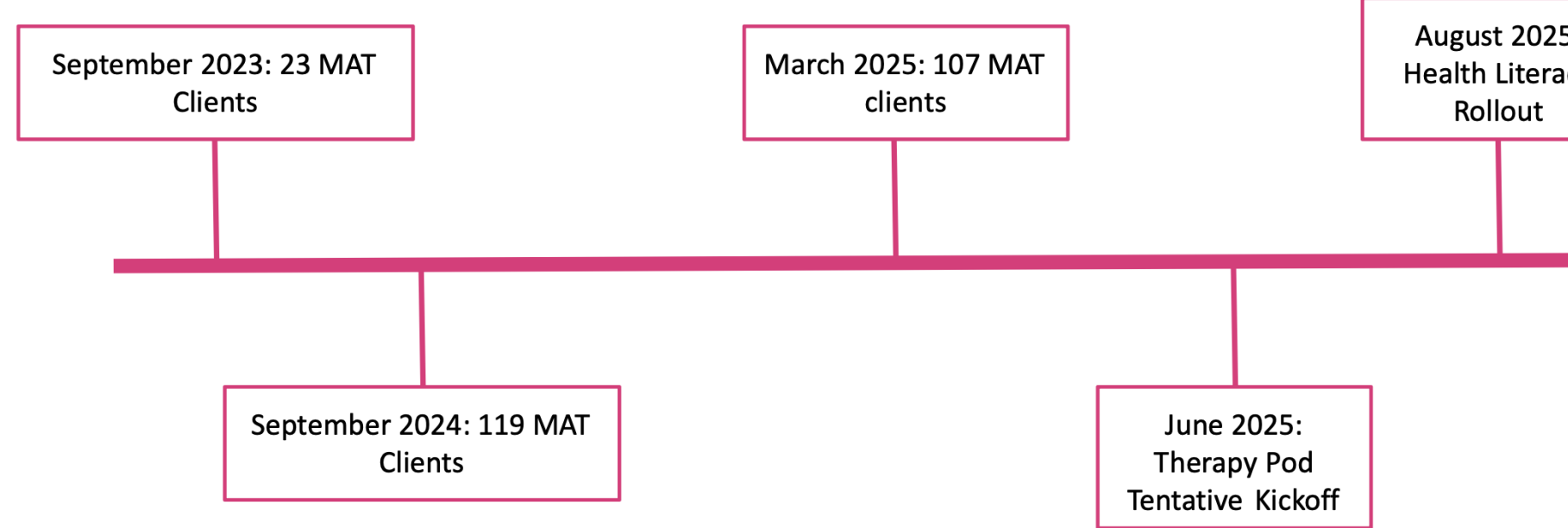
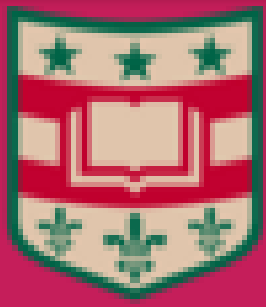


Discharge Outcomes for Individuals (August 2024)



Future Direction

Our initiatives aim to further enhance inmate rehabilitation through focused health and education programs. The Literacy Project will expand educational resources to improve both basic and health literacy, fostering informed decision-making, with plans for collaboration with educational organizations and the integration of digital tools. The Therapy Housing Pod model will be developed to support inmates transitioning from intensive care, incorporating a multidisciplinary approach with an emphasis on mental health, addiction recovery, and vocational training. Additionally, strengthening support and treatment for co-existing conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and mental health disorders will be prioritized, ensuring comprehensive care and continuity of care post-release.



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