



# Q & A with Jackie Brown, Chief of Physical Health Care Operations

By Southeast Health Group

**Q: Jackie, you've been in the nursing field for over 40 years. How do you feel about the opioid crisis and its effect on southeast Colorado?**

A: It breaks my heart. This isn't just happening to "that family down the road," it is happening to all families, regardless of social status. To see the loss of young lives who are members of our community, people and families that we all know, and the lingering impact on the families and the children left behind is a tragedy. We are losing far too many to this epidemic. Rural Colorado, especially southeast Colorado, has seen this epidemic explode. We all know someone who is impacted! As a nurse, I want to be able to help our community address these issues

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through collective impact. There is much work to do and it will take all of us to do it. We need to focus on prevention, as well as treatment for those caught up in the web of addiction and who are at risk of dying.

**Q: What is MAT—medication assisted treatment—and who benefits from it?**

A: MAT is a successful new treatment for people experiencing addiction to opioid pain medications or heroin. It involves taking a

prescription medication called Suboxone to stop the physical cravings associated with opioid use. The adoption of medication-assisted treatment (MAT) has been hindered by the stigma attached to those with substance use disorders, who are seen as people with moral failings rather than as patients with serious medical conditions. Medications can, of course, be subject to abuse or diversion. But evidence shows that these treatments are more successful than talk therapy alone, and they should be more widely available as part of recovery programs.

**Q: Who is a good candidate for MAT?**

A: Opioids are very addictive. Anyone who is concerned about their use of opioid pain medication or heroin use should call for an evaluation. Oftentimes, when someone has a dental procedure, an accident or surgery, they are prescribed a large amount of opioid pain medications. They keep taking them after the pain event is over and end up getting hooked. Or, someone else in the family finds the bottle of pills and takes them for recreational use. Either way, once a person is physically addicted, it's difficult to overcome opioid addiction on your own.

**Q: Who is on the MAT team at Southeast Health Group?**

A: Louisa Sisnroy, FNP- BC, and Michelle Gonzales, LPN, are the frontline folks for the MAT program. The initial contact and the first steps in the MAT program begin with them. However, MAT works best as part of a comprehensive treatment plan that includes counseling, pain management, wellness activities and peer support. Our MAT team



of professional staff includes mental health and addiction counselors, physical therapists, primary care providers, health navigators, health coaches, peer specialists and a vocational trainer ready to help you reclaim your life.

**Q: What other resources are available to people enrolled in the MAT program?**

A: SHG just received a grant from The Colorado Health Foundation to offer adjunct therapies to people enrolled in MAT. Now people have access to regular chiropractic care, massage therapy, Acudetox treatments, and health coaching to assist them in managing pain and reducing cravings associated with the opioid addiction.

**Q: How do people access these services?**

A: All you have to do is call SHG at 1-800-511-5446 and ask for an evaluation for MAT. You will get an appointment within 7 days, and start the process toward healing and recovery. SHG also has crisis services available 24/7/365. Don't delay. Start today.