

Virtual Buprenorphine Clinic

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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A Brief Overview

Opioids and Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)



Overview of Opioids

- Bind to opioid receptors in the brain that trigger the dopamine reward system
- **Systemic effects include:**
 - pain relief
 - feelings of euphoria
 - **decreased respiratory drive**
 - constipation
- Physiological dependence leads to **severe withdrawal syndrome** when use is stopped abruptly
- **Withdrawal symptoms include:**
 - gastrointestinal upset
 - Anxiety
 - insomnia
 - muscle cramps
 - excessive sweating



Medications for Opioid Use Disorder

- MOUDs are the first line treatment for Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)
- MOUD refers to modalities such as **Buprenorphine, Extended-release naltrexone, Buprenorphine extended release, and Methadone maintenance** treatment
- **Treatment for Overdose:**
 - Naloxone (Narcan) is an opioid blocker, usually administered as an intranasal spray



Buprenorphine Overview



- A partial agonist opioid medication
- Most commonly taken as a buprenorphine/naloxone combination known as Suboxone
- Can be taken as a pill or sublingually as a film that dissolves under the tongue
- Historically can only be prescribed by physicians who have undergone training to receive a waiver, and requires frequent office visits and check ins

The Intersection of

OUD and COVID-19



Impact of COVID-19 on OUD

Decreased Access to Care:

- Widespread outpatient clinic closures
- In-person support groups and group therapy meetings suspended
- Individuals may struggle to have a phone and find a space to speak in private or engage in group/individual meetings (i.e. for those undomiciled, in shelters, etc)



Impact of COVID-19 on OUD

Vulnerable OUD Populations:

- Pre-pandemic rise in opioid use and overdose in the last decade, more recently driven by **fentanyl**
- OUD may worsen individual COVID-19 outcomes
- Social isolation, disruptions to harm reduction and addiction treatment services, and overwhelmed ERs unable to refer individuals to care increase risk of morbidity and mortality



Response to COVID-19 Guidelines

- In response to efforts from advocates, the Drug Enforcement Agency and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) have broadened prescriber flexibility amidst the pandemic
- *“SAMHSA strongly recommends the use of **telehealth and/or telephonic services to provide evaluation and treatment of patients.** These resources can be used for initial evaluations including **evaluations for consideration of the use of buprenorphine products to treat opioid use disorder.**”*



NYC H+H

Virtual Buprenorphine Clinic



Timeline

- **March 12:** Temporary halt in new OBOT patients
- **March 17:** Virtual BPN clinic (VBC) planning meetings
- **March 20:** Governor stay at home order
- **March 25:** VBC operational



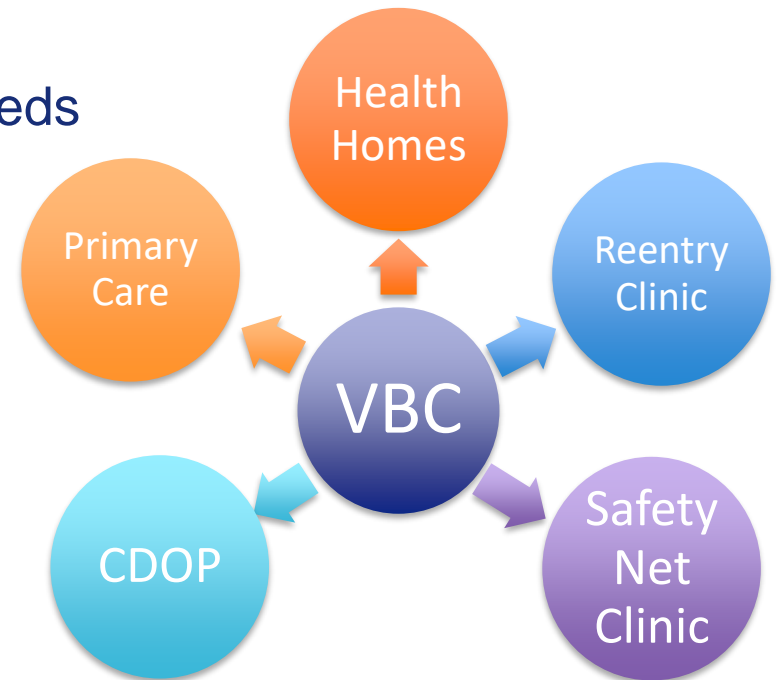
Who We Serve & What We Do

- We offer services to anyone in NYC seeking **continuation or initiation of buprenorphine treatment** for OUD
- For people currently out of state, we will provide care for if they have been seen at an H+H facility within the past year.
- We work with individuals on MAT **transitioning out of Rikers**
- We can take care of any patient **regardless of insurance or ability to pay**



Who We Serve & What We Do

- We do not offer methadone or Vivitrol, however we prescribe **Narcan**
- We can refer patients for additional needs including but not limited to:
 - primary care physicians
 - mental health resources
 - assistance with housing and phone access
 - free legal aid



Who We Are

The Virtual Buprenorphine Clinic is comprised of:

- Full-time **waivered providers** (MDs and NPs) who can prescribe buprenorphine
- **Social worker** to assist in managing insurance coverage and direct patients towards additional resources as needed
- **Clinic Coordinator** to track patient appointments and ensure patient medical needs are adequately met
- **Student volunteers** involved with in-between and missed visit follow up phone calls to address emergent issues/improve retention



Workflow

- Patient Intake
- First Visit (Physician Encounter)
- Between Visit Follow Up Check-Ins
- Follow Up Visits



Results

- **Enrollment:** 1-3 new patients daily

- **Demographic characteristics:**
 - Past month release from prison/jail: 22%
 - Not a mobile phone owner: 22%
 - Homeless: 20%

- **Clinical findings:**
 - Active enrollment post-induction: 78%
 - Referred to Intensive Outpatient Programs: 21%
 - Referred to primary care: 12%



Going Forward

- This is a **temporary solution** and only meant to provide short term care with the goal to transition patients to long term maintenance therapy at one of our many clinics at H+H or in the community as per the individual's preference
- We hope this model can demonstrate efficacy in addressing OUD via a telehealth modality, with an eye towards expanding access and care to this population going forward!



Virtual Buprenorphine Clinic Taking New Patients



NYC Health + Hospitals is operating a virtual buprenorphine (Suboxone) clinic in response to the COVID-19 emergency.

The clinic serves all NYC residents seeking opioid addiction treatment for **continuation or initiation** of buprenorphine.

Clinic hours (by phone or video conference):
Mon - Fri, 9 AM - 4 PM

For appointments and referrals, call:
212-562-2665

Thank You!

-The Virtual Buprenorphine Clinic Team