

Program Title: Mobile Medication Assisted Treatment Unit (MAT)

Organization: San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group (SLVBHG)

Program Abstract (50 words max, please):

Health on wheels: SLVBHG breaks down barriers to service in rural Colorado with a tricked-out RV – our Mobile Medication-Assisted Treatment Unit. Using Suboxone and Vivitrol in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, our agency provides holistic SUD treatment, operating in what health professionals call a "hard to reach population."

Program Description (Include program development, program information, staffing requirements, pertinent data and start-up costs.): *Please limit to 2 pages, and remember to address all criteria specified.

Program Development:

In 2019, San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group partnered with the Colorado Department of Human Services Office of Behavioral Health (OBH), Signal Behavioral Health Network, and West Slope Casa to operate a mobile health unit. Armed with Suboxone and Vivitrol, our staff on board the mobile health unit travels throughout our service area to combat the opioid crisis in rural southern Colorado. OBH received grant funding through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and partnered with Signal Behavioral Health Network and West Slope Casa to manage this project regionally. Working closely with these state allies, our agency's providers took medication-assisted treatment (MAT) therapy on the road. In addition, SLVBHG's tricked-out RV offers support services with a peer recovery coach, brief intervention, a prescription for MAT if needed, and linkage to wraparound services from our licensed practical nurse and licensed certified addictions counselor on board. Building on existing staff and well-established infrastructure, including an in-house pharmacy, SLVBHG has made a lasting impact on addiction treatment in rural Colorado. The success of this innovative treatment solution demonstrates San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group's dedication to removing service barriers, such as transportation, in what experts refer to as a "hard to reach population." The San Luis Valley spreads across approximately 8,000 square miles and is home to about 47,000 residents spread over six counties. Here, more than the vast expanse of land separates people from needed health care services. Yet, with a poverty rate nearly triple the state's average, high crime rates, and addiction on the rise, this historically underserved area has reaped many benefits of this added service in our community.

Program Information:

According to a Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report in 2016, opioid overdoses cause one death every twenty minutes. MAT is proven to be the most effective intervention to treat opioid use disorder. Our mobile health unit resembles a large recreational vehicle externally and a typical health clinic on the inside. Combining the use of FDA-approved medications, primarily Suboxone and Vivitrol, with counseling and behavioral therapies allows our staff to provide holistic support to each client. Because of the historically underserved nature of the San Luis Valley, many of the patients who get on board our mobile unit have many co-occurring issues that prevent them from seeking traditional health care. These issues can vary from addiction to housing instability, to unemployment, to food insecurity.

Our community-based integrated healthcare network also allowed our program to have multiple clients referred to them from our brick and mortar sites, primary care providers, and human service providers. Because of the traditional lack of resources for our population, we can also assist many clients with various other needs, including legal services, primary care referrals, gas and housing vouchers, and other services as needed. Mobile unit clients were also supported by other SLVBHG programs, including AcuDetox, after-hours emergency behavioral health services, peer support services, adherence assistance, jail-based SUD services, employment search, and education. Our Mobile Health Unit will also offer hepatitis C screening and treatment services soon, as our staff and relevant data suggest a strong need for this in our area.

Staffing Requirements:

Onboard our Mobile MAT unit are three dedicated staff members: a licensed practical nurse, a licensed/certified addictions counselor, and a peer recovery coach. Our counselor can connect with clients in-person or virtually via telehealth in a private compartment onboard the RV. Additionally, our agency managed grant funds and delivered fiscal and accounting services regarding this program to track expenses and pay contracted personnel.

Pertinent Data:

Since the Mobile MAT unit first rolled through our community in 2019, our staff have served a total of **139** unduplicated clients and had **1,430** total encounters on their respective journeys to recovery. Engagement in services is a critical challenge that many health professionals have to confront. Our staff analyzed retention data from the past twelve months and found that, on average, clients engaged in **3.62** months of services and approximately **eight** services per client. Typically, our specialized staff serves an average of **two** unduplicated clients a week and about **20** encounters on board the unit.

Success Story: After giving birth to a newborn girl who tested positive for opiates, one of our clients knew that she needed help. After detoxing for 30 days and completing an in-residential treatment with her child, this client sought care through our Mobile MAT Unit. She said that the unit was convenient and supportive. “I went there to get my drugs for medication-assisted treatment, but I also got therapeutic support. I felt like the doctors on the mobile unit were willing to help me with anything.”

Success Story: Opioid use in all groups of people is on the rise statistically, and reaching individuals to help them access treatment can be challenging, especially in places like the San Luis Valley. Thus, SLVBHG is exceptionally proud of the 112 clients currently being served by our Mobile MAT unit. One of those clients has been coming in for over two years, and they are now over one year clean and expecting a baby. Their success has allowed them to build a happy and healthy family unit and lead a positive and successful life. Likewise, our Mobile MAT unit has successfully helped several new parents and moms kick their addictions and lead healthy lives with their children. Our staff on board the unit are available and ready to help all who come aboard reach their full potential. These success stories are so rewarding for our staff, who are dedicated to each patient’s healing and recovery processes.

Start-up Costs:

The Mobile MAT unit was supported by a donation of **\$399,000** for the RV unit and a **\$155,925** first-year budget. Additionally, our organization was awarded funding through the Office of Behavioral Health’s work under the State Opioid Response crisis grant program intended to target underserved communities across the State of Colorado.

Signal Behavioral Health Network also engaged with our establishment to provide technical assistance during the initial start-up. Further, SLVBHG also bills Medicaid and private insurance for visits aboard the unit and treatment received.