

Mobile addiction services vans to provide treatment and needle exchange in New Bedford

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced the award of four contracts to provide Mobile Addiction Services Vans in Boston, Springfield, Worcester, Fall River, and New Bedford, that will serve individuals at high risk for overdose and other medical complications associated with substance use.

The mobile vans will provide treatment and basic clinical care including medications for addiction treatment, naloxone distribution and training, and syringe exchange. They will also offer primary care services such as wound care, vaccinations, screenings for communicable diseases including HIV and tuberculosis, and referrals to behavioral health services and specialty care.

“The disproportionate impact on underserved communities and populations requires that we bring treatment and care to people who otherwise would not get it,” said Public Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. “These vans will bring treatment directly into areas most affected and connect them to potentially lifesaving services.”

The goal is to provide care to individuals not receiving services through other means, initiate medication for addiction treatment, and provide connections to long-term, community-based care in an effort to prevent overdose deaths, support long-term recovery, and improve health and quality of life for vulnerable individuals.

“Offering low threshold, low barrier access to treatment,

clinical care and harm reduction services is crucial,” said Deirdre Calvert, Director of DPH’s Bureau of Substance Addiction Services. “These vans will provide additional access and help us to connect with individuals we’ve been unable to reach before.”

DPH will provide each of the van service providers, Boston Health Care for the Homeless in Boston, Tapestry Health Systems in Springfield, UMass Memorial Medical Center in Worcester, and Stanley Street Treatment and Resources (SSTAR) in New Bedford, \$350,000 annually to provide these services. The Kraft Family Foundation has donated the vans in Worcester and Springfield. The anticipated start of Mobile Addiction services is July 1, 2020.