

Middlesex County Sheriff's Office MATADOR Program

On September 19th, 2018 I had the opportunity to visit the Middlesex County Jail and House of Correction as part of a peer review program. The MATADOR program was the focal point of the visit which I will detail after a summary of the geography of the area.

The County:

Middlesex County is in Massachusetts, adjacent to Boston and makes up the largest county in Massachusetts in terms of population and it is the third-largest county in Massachusetts by land area.

Middlesex County is made up of 54 municipal governments, each with its own police force and holding area for arrestees that are awaiting a court appearance.

In 1998 Middlesex County government was dissolved and absorbed by the State of Massachusetts. The County line serves as a boundary for County level elections like the Sheriff, who serves a 6 year term.

The Sheriff's Office:

The Sheriff's Office's primary function is to administer and operate both a male jail and house of correction. The two facilities are co-located on the same property and are laid out like a prison would be in Washington State.

Their original structure was built in 1933 and functions as the maintenance and support building that houses boilers, heaters and air handling equipment. They have remodeled and added housing space; the two latest projects in 2004 and again in 2014. This was a result of them closing down another jail in the area.

They employ over 675 employees who are paid with State funds to serve in a variety of functions including HR, grounds keeping, vehicle maintenance, GED and support services, treatment navigators and statistics.

All female inmates, pre-trial and sentenced, are transported to a Department of Corrections facility in Framingham, Massachusetts about 45 minutes away.

The Middlesex County House of Correction houses sentenced male inmates who are serving 30 months or less. The same applies for the female inmates but they are housed at the DOC property.

Their "jail" is only for pre-trial males.

Their combined male average daily population is about 795 and their capacity is around 1200.

The MATADOR Program:

"Medication Assisted Treatment and Directed Opioid Recovery"

The Sheriff has recognized that while the opioid problem is not all laid at the feet of the criminal justice system, the Sheriff's Office has a crucial opportunity to intercede in the lives of people who pass through their facilities where no other agency may. The likelihood of an opioid related overdose death is

increased for individuals who have been incarcerated and continues to increase the longer they are in custody.

The MATADOR program is a counselling and medication based program that emphasizes the need for willful change in behavior and thinking that ultimately brings about transformation in a person's life.

MATADOR is for all people involved in the criminal justice system. The Sheriff's Office starts all participants on Medicare to ensure that there is continuity of care whether or not the individual is in custody.

The program has developed over years to incorporate induction on the program while people are in custody, partnered with at least 5 counselling sessions before getting a shot of Vivitrol before release from jail.

Individuals are referred to the program in a variety of ways but the crucial element in the program is the personality of the navigators involved. They are deeply concerned with the health and wellbeing of the people in their community and clearly show it through their dedicated and seemingly relentless pursuit of the addicted population of Middlesex County.

Another key component to the success of the MATADOR program is the meticulous collection and analysis of data that both identifies issues but shows the successes of the program.

The Middlesex County Sheriff is clearly concerned with addiction recovery and has dedicated considerable resources to combat the issue. But he also has the financial support of the state, and the partnership of a number of local service providers that make up the bigger support network necessary to make the program successful.

Whatcom County Options:

We have opportunities to continue the work the Sheriff's Office began over a year ago to provide medically assisted treatment to our justice involved population.

Sheriff Koutoujian has particular philosophies that we agree with and will adopt. We agree that MAT should be a part of our portfolio of options, as Chief Jones has been busy developing our program for over a year. We also believe in careful methodical adoption of practices that are safe and sustainable in the long run.

We continue to advocate incorporating counselling as the foundation for recovery, not purely medication as we believe that recovery is not a simple matter, nor is there one solution that will meet the needs of everyone.

We will need space, funding and staffing in order to make our ideas come to fruition.

We must be careful to build a support network in the community and the state in order to maintain the viability of our program and to provide more good than harm.