

MAT in the DOC:

Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for Justice-Involved Individuals

What is MAT?

The term MAT stands for Medication-Assisted Treatment, and has gained huge momentum as a modern, successful, and research-proven way to help lighten the weight of addiction recovery, especially from opioids. Because of the intense cravings, detox, and withdrawal symptoms involved in quitting, addiction is difficult to overcome. For those who have been incarcerated or released from prison, addiction recovery can present an additional barrier to success. MAT relieves some of the struggles that come with controlling addiction, eliminating substance abuse, recovering from symptoms, managing relationships, and moving on with life in the community. Because it involves both behavioral therapy and FDA-approved medication that can help addicted individuals curb their cravings, MAT can make quitting drugs easier so that they can start life over without addiction weighing them down.

Why is it Necessary?

Over the last decade, the use of opiates in the United States has risen so much that it has become an epidemic. Fatal drug overdose is now the number one cause of accidental death, with deaths caused by opiate-based drugs increasing the most. In the PA DOC alone, approximately 65% (two thirds) of the population has been assessed as having an alcohol or other drug problem. In fact, the number of new commitments with an assessed heroin problem has doubled, accounting for 6% of new commitments ten years ago to 12% of new commitments today. Research has shown that traditional approaches, such as "just saying no" are just not working. Using data to drive policy and practice, the PA DOC is tackling a prominently long-overdue change in approach, treating addiction while it addresses crime - doing so before, during, and after an individual's transition home. Traditional, one-dimensional abstinence programming has proven ineffective. Instead, MAT sheds some light on what has been a dark outlook for many years, approaching addiction like the chronic disease it is and proving to be a strong solution in the modern age of addiction treatment. And because opioids are so powerful, those who are trying to recover need multiple types of help in order to beat the disease. MAT offers a comprehensive, two-dimensional model of treatment. Using medications, such as methadone, Vivitrol, Revia, Suboxone, and Subutex, MAT allows individuals to receive customized treatment to address the physical challenges of recovery. To address the mental challenges of recovery, MAT includes behavioral health treatment to change thinking patterns and old habits. While no single treatment is right for all individuals, MAT offers the same benefits for offenders all who qualify:

- Provides safe, carefully introduced, physician-controlled medication that blocks, reduces, or alters the potent effects of addiction, such as cravings, tolerance, dependence, detoxification, and withdrawal.
- Type of medication varies depending on the addiction, but all types of medications can be safely taken (as long as is indicated) under close monitoring for the duration of treatment.
- Consistent counseling and programming focus on healthy thinking patterns, lifestyle changes, coping skills, overcoming setbacks, and improving connections with family and friends.

About the Medications - Quick Reference

GENERIC NAME	TRADE NAME
naltrexone (injectable)	Vivitrol
naltrexone (oral)	Revia
buprenorphine	Subutex
buprenorphine + naloxone	Suboxone
naloxone	Narcan
methadone	multiple trade names

Moving Forward

The PA DOC believes that in order for individuals to *sustain* recovery success in the community, they must first be *supported* in their recovery success. To ensure that it enables all individuals to receive the best, medically indicated treatment available to address their addictions, the PA DOC will be expanding its use of MAT to its full potential - which, in the end, means sending home individuals who are not left on their own in their recovery and who have been afforded the understanding that the disease is not the crime.