



“It’s the Humane Thing to Do”

Lack of medication-assisted treatment (MAT) in prisons and jails is a major problem in Los Angeles County and is emblematic of a national issue. Recent research indicates that offering MAT in correctional facilities would considerably reduce opioid overdose deaths after release. Despite this research, treatment options remain limited both nationally and in L.A. County.

Dr. Tesema served as a physician in the L.A. County jail system, where she encountered many people struggling with opioid use disorders. "Currently, the L.A. County jail system only offers one of three FDA-approved medication treatments – Naltrexone - to treat addiction. The lack of medication-assisted treatments in L.A. county jails means that the risk of relapse after leaving jail is high," Dr. Tesema says.

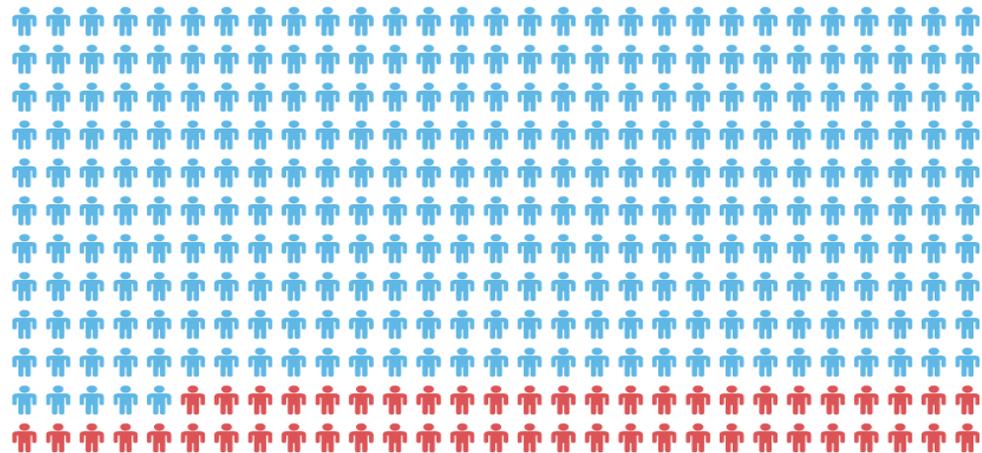
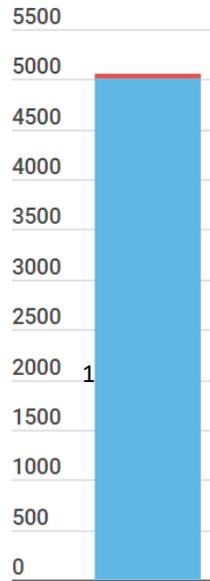
Furthermore, she continues, "the more advanced the addiction is, the more intense the fear of withdrawal is. This fear is what pushes people to keep using opioids if MAT, which relieves withdrawal symptoms, is unavailable. Untreated opioid withdrawal in jails is a major risk factor for suicide."

Offering MAT in jails would be life-saving to members of our L.A. community. **It’s the humane thing to do.**

There are approximately 18,000 people incarcerated daily across seven L.A. county jails. Of those incarcerated, approximately 3,240 (18%) of them are struggling with an opioid addiction.

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Fewer than 1% of the more than 5,000 U.S. prisons and jails offer medication-assisted treatment (MAT).



1 Vestal, C. New Momentum for Addiction Treatment Behind Bars. *Pew Trusts*. April 4, 2018 <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2018/04/04/new-momentum-for-addiction-treatment-behind-bars>

2 McCravey H, Aminzadeh A, Pfeifer K, Strugar-Fritsch D. Closing the Loop in Treating Opioid Addiction: Integrating MAT into Prison and Jail Health Systems. *California Health Care Foundation*. May 9, 2018 <https://www.chcf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/WebinarClosingLoopMATCorrections05092018.pdf>

