

Substance Use in Pine County

Supports and Barriers to Recovery - Fall 2020

Pine County is a large, diverse county with impressive rural areas and beautiful state parks. It has a main interstate that runs through the center that provides positive business traffic and essential economy but is also used as an avenue for drug and sex trafficking. Burglaries and theft are common crimes; most of these, along with Child Protective Services (CPS) cases, involve substance use. Meth is the biggest drug problem in Pine County, followed by alcohol, cannabis, and a growing heroin and prescription opioid problem. Increases in injection drug use have been seen in recent years. The population of Pine County is supportive of addressing the issue of substance use, but more awareness and education is needed to address the growing problem.

District III of the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe

Nestled within Pine County, the Band brings a rich cultural perspective and works in collaboration with Pine County Health & Human Services to combat substance use. Culturally-specific treatment has proven effective in tribal populations, but there is a need for greater access. Sober Squad is a positive recovery group that brings fellowship and chemical-free social activities to the community, as well as providing support in recovery.

Pine County Jail

The Pine County Jail is hoping to expand substance use programming and integrate Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) services. There is a need for more felon-friendly employers and an expansion of the existing Work Release Program.

East Central and Hinckley-Finlayson School Districts

East Central and Hinckley-Finlayson School Districts work in partnership with Pine County Health & Human Services and the Pine County Chemical Health Coalition to operate a "Positive Community Norms Campaign" that focuses on the prevention of underage drinking and recently a new campaign has been started for tobacco, vaping and e-cigarettes. These campaigns have been positively received, but no such campaign exists for other substances such as heroin, methamphetamines or other opiates.

Services and Training: Existing and Needed

There are also Adverse Child Experiences and Mending Broken Hearts trainings that address trauma. Naloxone is carried by some public service departments in Pine County but not all. There is a growing need for MAT services, sober housing, transportation, and residential treatment centers.

Five Major Strengths

1. A community that cares and wants to help, Pine County Chemical Health Coalition
2. Partnerships between Pine County Health and Human Services and Mille Lacs District 3 - tribal practices and services
3. Positive Community Norms Campaign, focusing on alcohol and vaping, ACES training, Mending Broken Hearts (trauma)
4. Naloxone training popularity, interest and de-stigmatizing jail support for MAT and substance use programming
5. Work Release Program and present recovery services, Sober Squad

Five Major Barriers/Needs

1. Sober housing and transportation (tribal-specific housing and non-specific)
2. Transitional substance use services after residential treatment or jail
3. Residential treatment centers for men and youth in county
4. Community awareness education, employer education, and prevention education
5. MAT services close by and cultural-specific treatment

Gaps, Growing Edges, and Questions for Future Growth

- How can the community better support individuals (and their families) returning to the community from treatment?
- What opportunities exist to support/establish transportation services that are able to take individuals to and from recovery programming and support?
- How can the community bring more awareness to substance use disorders and what community events could help to support this?
 - Host community forums
 - "Virtual Home Tours" to educate parents, teachers on substance use
 - Paraphernalia/signs
 - Prescriber education
 - Relapse understanding
- How can we support employers to hire individuals in recovery or offenders recently released from jail to help reduce stigma?
 - Education to employers on the work-release program
 - Transitions for those from recovery/incarceration into the workforce
 - Highlighting the benefits to employers
- How can the community better promote recovery services that are available to those in the community and those who might be in need? What would this look like?
- What opportunities exist to potentially address sober/transitional housing?
- How can schools help to educate students and families on substance use disorders?
- How can the community support community-based education?
 - MAT programming
 - Residential treatment programming
 - Carrying and administering naloxone
 - Addressing trauma

This project is supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, under award number 1H79T108900-01.

