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Care of Southeastern Michigan finds new ways to get people into recovery

FINALIST

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Photo by Jacob Lewkow for Crain's From left to right: Monique Stanton, president and CEO; Susan Styf, chief program officer; Paul Sarris, director of Peer Recovery Services and Liz Arndt, CFO.

- Care of Southeastern Michigan lost core program with state programmatic shift
- The loss translated to 12 percent of its budget at a time of rising demand for addiction recovery services
- Expanding existing peer coach program is providing enhanced services and revenue

As the region's opioid crisis escalated, Care of Southeastern Michigan lost one of its core programs.

Two years ago, the state began requiring counties to provide the referral and coordination of addiction recovery services themselves, rather than outsourcing them.

For Care, that meant losing a core program it had been founded on 40 years earlier and translated to a 12 percent drop in revenue.

It led the agency, which provides services in Macomb and Wayne counties, to take a fresh look at how to meet growing demand for addiction services in Southeastern Michigan.

It spent some time developing a new strategic plan and hired a new development director to start diversifying its revenue beyond government funding through efforts including a tasting event with local restaurants at the GM Heritage Center. This year, about 10 percent of its \$4.7 million budget will come from individuals and employee assistance programs offered by local employers.

To meet rising demand for addiction services, Care began expanding its existing peer recovery coach program in May.

The program, first launched in 2012, provides a coach — a recovering addict with first-hand experience of the issues addicts struggle with — to work with clients.

Coaches typically have four or more years of recovery and are educated and trained in support services to help initiate, achieve and sustain recovery.

“They’re serving as ... a person that provides a continuous care for individuals coming into the system,” Care’s President and CEO Monique Stanton said.

“Research definitely shows the fewer times you have changes in care, the better. Having one person you’re able to develop a strong relationship with helps.”

To expand the program, Care designated one of its knowledgeable staff members to train and credential peer coaches and created two supervisor positions. It doubled its number of employees to 86 from 30 last year. As part of that, it added eight peer coaches. There are now 23 peer coaches total in the program.

Care also had to get creative to find new ways to connect with people in need of their services, since they lost their ability to secure referrals when they ceded their coordination role to the county.

Care established relationships with local hospitals including St. John Macomb and Henry Ford Macomb, area drug and sobriety courts and correctional facilities to serve as a resource for addicts.

Since May, it’s provided services to nearly 500 people in the hospitals, many of whom would not have otherwise sought treatment.

And Care is helping increase the self-sufficiency of people coming out of incarceration in Macomb County.

Care's budget has increased to \$4.7 million for fiscal 2018, up from \$2.8 million in 2016 on the strength of fundraising and funding from the Macomb County Office of Substance Abuse & Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority.

"There weren't other providers in Macomb doing that service, we had that unique expertise, and it really has shown good outcomes," Stanton said.