

Creating a Mobile Narcotic Treatment Program (MNTP):



Toolkit for Licensed Narcotic Treatment Programs (NTP)



This resource was created by Aurrera Health Group
with support from the Department of Health Care Services

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Background

In 2021, the [Drug Enforcement Agency \(DEA\)](#) authorized NTPs to operate MNTPs under the [existing DEA registration of their primary NTP](#). Following this rule change, DHCS is supporting the statewide implementation of MNTPs. This toolkit is intended to serve as a resource for NTPs who want to establish MNTPs in California, and it highlights key components that NTPs should consider as they work through that process.



Glossary of Terms

Opioid Use Disorder (OUD): OUD is a diagnosable and treatable disorder defined by the [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Edition 5 \(DSM-5\)](#) as a problematic pattern of opioid use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress. Symptoms may include behavior characterized by craving, increased tolerance, and withdrawal when opioid use stops, and persistent use of opioids despite adverse consequences. OUD has also been referred to as opioid dependence.

Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD): Medications for opioid use disorder are medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration for treating OUD. MOUD can be used as a standalone treatment or in combination with behavioral therapy. The terms medication assisted treatment (MAT) and MOUD are often used interchangeably.

Narcotic Treatment Program (NTP): California's NTPs provide medications for opioid use disorder to persons living with an OUD. [SAMHSA refers to these programs as opioid treatment programs](#) (OTPs). NTPs, whether inpatient or outpatient, are authorized to provide the following: evaluation, maintenance treatment and/or withdrawal management treatment, and other services in the context of treating OUD registered under 21 U.S.C. 823(h)(1).

Mobile Narcotic Treatment Program (MNTP): An MNTP is a mobile component of a primary NTP operating from a motor vehicle under the primary NTP's DEA registration and DHCS license. An MNTP provides maintenance treatment and withdrawal management at locations remote from the NTP's registered location, but within California.



Direct Service Staff: Staff that provides direct support to MOUD activities, including Dispensing Nurses, Administrative Staff, Physicians, Practitioners such as Nurse Practitioner or Physician Assistants, and Registered, Certified, or Exempt Counselors.

Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) Schedule III Practitioner: Practitioners with a current DEA registration that includes [Schedule III](#) authority to administer and/or dispense controlled substances, including buprenorphine, for OUD.



Checklist for Starting an MNTP



- Determine what services the NTP and MNTP will provide. Ensure adequate privacy and space for the services provided.
- Ensure that the NTP has a valid DHCS NTP license, DEA registration, SAMHSA certification, and demonstrates Drug Medi-Cal enrollment if needed to serve the patient population.
- Engage your local DEA office, DHCS and SAMHSA early in the process. Contact your local DEA office, DHCS and SAMHSA simultaneously and inform them of your implementation plan.
- Contact local stakeholder groups early to inform them of your MNTP implementation plans. Stakeholders include:
 - » Local community members, businesses, individuals who will receive MNTP services, and other stakeholders who will be affected by where the van will be providing services.
 - » Local permitting authorities if the van needs certain permits to be parked.
- Create an operating budget and determine expenses, including start-up costs and vehicle maintenance costs. Expenses may include:
 - » Cost to purchase a van;
 - » Cost to build out the van according to DEA requirements;
 - » Regular vehicle maintenance costs;
 - » Estimated costs of gas;
 - » Staffing costs.
- Outline the daily logistics for the MNTP, such as vehicle parking and operating schedules under various circumstances, such as inclement weather, road construction, and official holiday schedules.
- Create a staffing plan for the MNTP that includes a recruitment strategy and workforce development.
- Determine what strategies and tools you will use to inform the community about the MNTP. Tools could include:
 - » Creating a cooperative plan with harm reduction and community health organizations to advertise and link community members to treatment;
 - » Education that OUD is a brain disease and proven outcomes of OUD treatment;
 - » Creating an advertising plan;
 - » Presenting at community events.



Steps to Keep in Mind When Starting an MNTP

1) Directly communicate with relevant groups about the MNTP implementation plan early.

Order of Communications Touch Points



- » **Start by engaging with your local DEA office as soon as possible.** Before purchasing a vehicle and other necessary supplies for setting up your MNTP, contact your local DEA office and inform them of your MNTP implementation plan. Be sure to discuss the specific vehicle you plan to purchase to function as the MNTP and other equipment necessary for the MNTP, such as the medication safe. By engaging with your local DEA office early, you can become aware of DEA MNTP requirements and confirm that your planned purchases meet their requirements. You can locate your local DEA office [here](#).
- » **Engage with DHCS as soon as possible.** DHCS requires that they inspect the MNTP before it can be operational. When DHCS inspects the MNTP it should be built out and equipped to provide services. Engaging with DHCS early can guide the NTP in navigating these requirements during and after the implementation of the MNTP.
- » **Engage with SAMHSA as soon as possible.** Remember that the primary NTP must have a valid SAMHSA accreditation before building out an MNTP. SAMHSA has [standards](#) that MNTPs must meet for accreditation and certification. The standards can be found on the [SAMHSA website](#).
- » **Engage with your local stakeholders as soon as possible.** Local stakeholders can include, but are not limited to, city/town commissioners, permitting authorities, individuals served by the MNTP, and others in the community whom the presence of the MNTP may impact. By communicating with and receiving feedback from your local stakeholders, your organization can build community support for the MNTP. Additionally, engaging the community can help you determine the best place to park the MNTP, hours of operation, and other logistics. Community leadership that is aware and supportive of the MNTP's plan is one important way to ensure that the MNTP's services can operate at full capacity.



Furthermore, it is important that MNTPs engage with individuals who receive services from the MNTP to shape policies. This, too, will help MNTPs develop policies that meet the community's needs and garner the support of those the MNTP intends to serve.

- » **Continue to communicate with the DEA and DHCS simultaneously and consistently.** Regular communication with your local DEA and DHCS can keep you on track with requirements, and adjustments can be made in real time instead of waiting until the MNTP unit is all built out. It is recommended that an NTP works to schedule inspections with the DEA and DHCS to happen around the same time so that delays in starting the MNTP are avoided.

2) Create an operating budget and determine expenses, including vehicle costs and other start-up costs.

- » **Overall Cost.** A fully built-out and functioning MNTP can be estimated to cost between \$380,000 and \$650,000. These prices fluctuate with market costs and the type of vehicle purchased for the services that MNTP plans to offer. NTPs should plan to buy newer vehicles (1-2 years old) to avoid significant maintenance repairs within the early years of the MNTP functioning.
- » **Vehicle manufacturer.** Choose a manufacturer with a history of retrofitting RVs and vans for medical purposes. They will be familiar with basic requirements and be more adept at working with licensing and authorization entities.
- » **Supplies to consider in itemized costs.** There are many components outside of the initial purchase of a vehicle that you should consider when building out an MNTP. Below are some examples of items that are reasonable expenses to expect. Note that this is not a comprehensive list. Engage with your local DEA office throughout the build-out of your MNTP to be aware of all requirements.

VEHICLE COSTS:

- Purchase of the vehicle itself
- Insurance
- Registration
- Conversion of the vehicle to meet requirements for providing medical services

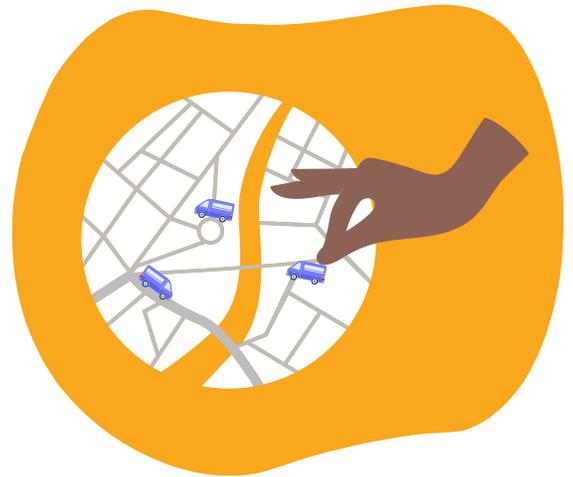
OTHER START-UP COSTS:

- Alarm system
- Medication safe
- Medication refrigerator
- Medical supplies
- Dispensing equipment
- Office equipment (such as Wi-Fi/internet, laptops, etc.)
- Generator



3) Outline the daily logistics for the MNTP, such as vehicle parking and operating schedules under various circumstances (inclement weather or if the vehicle needs repairs and cannot operate).

» **Determine the best place to park the MNTP.** Be sure to find a location accessible to individuals the MNTP intends to serve. Also, make sure to research local zoning laws, as these may impact the ability of the MNTP to provide services in certain areas. City websites often contain information about local zoning laws, such as zoning maps. Consider using a search engine and inputting the name of your city followed by "zoning map." If you need further information, consider calling your local government, such as your city council, to request the most up-to-date information about local zoning laws.



» **Create an operating schedule that meets the needs of clients.** It is important to remember accessibility, such as the typical workday of persons the MNTP seeks to serve and how that may restrict some individuals from accessing MNTP services during workday hours. Questions to consider are:

- **What days and times will the MNTP be in regular service?**
Please note that the Behavioral Health Information Notice [\(BHIN\) 24-005: Mobile Narcotic Treatment Programs](#) outlines that MNTPs must be open at least five days a week.
- **How can operating hours be structured to ensure that working individuals can receive treatment?**
- **Will the MNTP offer services during certain holidays?**
- **Will the MNTP provide services in the evenings and/or weekends?**
- **How will the MNTP inform the community about closures and operating-hour changes?**
- **Will the MNTP allow individuals to bring children with them?**
- **Will the MNTP be able to provide services at the same time every day?**
- **If the MNTP breaks down or is in disrepair, how will the NTP ensure patients have access to medication?**



- » **Have a plan for operating during inclement weather.** Poor weather may hinder an MNTP from providing all its services. Determine a backup plan for what your MNTP will do in these circumstances.



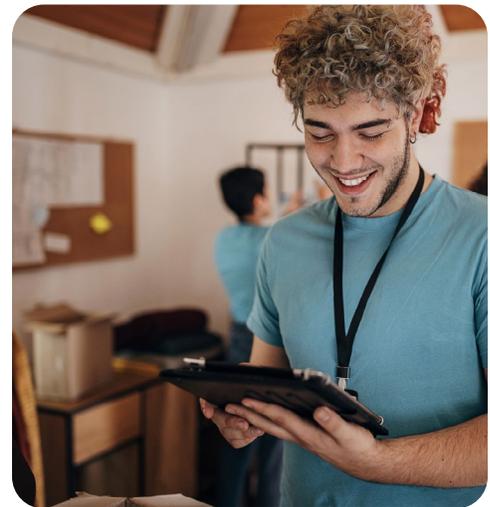
4) Create a staffing plan that includes a recruitment strategy and workforce development.

- » **Create a staffing plan based on the services the MNTP will provide and the community it plans to serve.** The type of necessary staff includes, but is not limited to, dispensing nurses, security guards, registered or certified counselors, administrative staff, physicians, and practitioners such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants.
- » **Develop recruitment materials for staff and providers.** Creating recruitment materials can help with hiring an adequate number of experienced staff to meet the needs of the MNTP. Recruitment materials should encourage an informed pool of applicants while informing the broader community about the purpose of the MNTP.
- » **Incorporate workforce development into your staffing plan.** Regular training and educational requirements can combat stigma and encourage an environment where individuals receiving services from the MNTP can feel welcome and accepted.



5) Inform the community about the MNTP as a treatment resource.

- » **Determine what tools you will use to provide this information about the MNTP.** A well-functioning MNTP is a valuable treatment resource for the community, especially in underserved areas. By drafting marketing materials and conducting outreach, clients who may benefit from receiving treatment from an MNTP can be aware of this resource. Consider contacting shared spaces such as community health centers, existing substance use disorder treatment centers, certified treatment counselors, and other providers to have them help spread the word. Furthermore, engaging community members through outreach can serve as an opportunity to educate the community about what the MNTP seeks to do and build support.



Key Questions to Consider When Establishing an MNTP

The questions below are intended to help guide an NTP in developing a plan for creating an MNTP. This is not a comprehensive list of things to consider.

- 1 Did you inform your local DEA office of your MNTP implementation plan?
- 2 Did you contact a seller for the vehicle, and does this seller have experience creating medical units?
- 3 Did you contact a seller for a medical safe, and does this safe meet your local DEA's requirements?
- 4 Where do you plan to park the MNTP? Will local zoning laws allow the MNTP to park and provide services there? Is it accessible to the community members who will be accessing services regularly?
- 5 What services does the MNTP plan to offer? What staffing is required to offer these services?
- 6 What is the planned operating schedule for the MNTP?
- 7 How will the MNTP ensure access to medications for individuals they are treating should the MNTP break down or inclement weather hinder the MNTP from reaching the community?
- 8 How is the NTP going to engage the community about the MNTP?



Additional Resources

- » [BHIN 24-005 Mobile Narcotic Treatment Programs](#)
- » [Federal Register :: Medications for the Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder](#)
- » [Federal Register :: Registration Requirements for Narcotic Treatment Programs With Mobile Components](#)
- » [2022 DEA Narcotic Treatment Program Manual](#)
 - ▶ Serves as a guide to DEA Narcotic Treatment Program regulations.
 - ▶ Has information such as NTP registration, recordkeeping, security, and inventory requirements.
 - ▶ Section 12.1 has information for mobile narcotic treatment vans.
- » [SAMHSA | Certification of Opioid Treatment Programs \(OTPs\)](#)
- » [Kraft Center of Community Health Mobile Addiction Service Toolkit:](#)
 - ▶ The Kraft Center for Community Health at Massachusetts General Hospital created this [Mobile Addiction Services Toolkit](#), which provides guidance about planning and creating a mobile medical van.
 - ▶ Provides relevant information about key items to consider when creating a mobile medical van, such as van specifications and purchasing, budget considerations, and outreach and engagement.
- » The [Rural Health Information Hub](#) has information about [Colorado's Mobile Health Units for Opioid Use Disorder Treatment](#). These mobile units did not provide MOUD directly, but offered OUD services including counseling, drug testing, naloxone, referral to wraparound services, syringe disposal, and telehealth services. The lessons learned from this program, which ran from January 2020 to January 2021, may help inform the implementation of an MNTP.
- » [Expanding the Use of Mobile Vans](#) Webinar.
 - ▶ The American Association for the Treatment of Opioid Dependence (AATOD) hosted a "How To" webinar about expanding the use of mobile vans for addiction treatment.
 - ▶ Provides an overview of the SAMHSA portal that needs to be used when applying for a mobile unit (SAMHSA Portal: [SMA-162: Mobile Unit](#)).



- ▶ CODAC Behavioral Healthcare, one of the country's first mobile units to be approved under the new DEA regulations, presents their experience.
- ▶ The webinar also had the Anne Arundel County Department of Health in Maryland present their experience creating their mobile narcotic treatment program through the Maryland Opioid Operational Command Center's Examination and Treatment Act Grant Program, which was announced in January 2022.

» [Local DEA Office Locator](#)



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