

## With need greater than ever, opioid treatment facing big cuts



NORWICH 04-28-16: Anna Podolsky at home at Thames View Apartments in Norwich. Aaron Flaum/ NorwichBulletin.com

By **Jaclyn Diaz**

**jmdiaz@norwichbulletin.com**, (860) 425-4256

Posted Apr. 30, 2016 at 8:21 PM

Since 2011, Gov. Dannel P. Malloy has signed several measures into law that his office claims has put Connecticut in a position to be “a leader” in preventing substance abuse and opioid overdose.

But clinicians and doctors on the frontlines dealing with addiction say the state is forgetting a crucial step in combating the opioid epidemic: Treatment.

Administrators of rehabilitation centers in the region say the state isn’t offering resources or introducing legislation to strengthen rehabilitation services. Many centers have waitlists for inpatient treatment beds. At a time when Connecticut is seeing record levels of heroin use—723 people died from drug overdoses in Connecticut last year—the need for those services are greater than ever.

Jack Malone, executive director of SCADD, said lawmakers prefer to pat themselves on the back for passing legislation such as Monday’s opioid bill. Much of the bill is focused on widening access to the opioid reversal drug, naloxone, and putting checks in place to cut down on easy access to painkillers.

“I applaud them, too, but the reality is you still have an enormous drug problem in the state and in all of our communities and there will not be enough money to provide treatment,” Malone said.

With proposed cuts upwards of \$7 million and layoffs to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services in the works this budget season, the outlook for treatment programs is not good.

The cuts include \$453,359 for grants to substance abuse services and \$1,445,610 for mental health services Malloy’s proposal.

SCADD is a nonprofit treatment organization with inpatient and outpatient facilities in Norwich, Lebanon and New London.

Malone said nonprofit treatment centers like his aren’t expecting much from the state this budget season.

“We’re just living in despair waiting for the final budget and to see what those cuts will be. The only thing treatment centers like SCADD are getting out of this legislative session is funding cuts. There’s no money to fund these programs at the level they need to be funded,” Malone said. The program is funded by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Like many other regional inpatient treatment programs, the demand for beds remains high.

Malone said the 110-bed residential treatment center in Lebanon is almost always full.

Anna Podolsky, 32 of Norwich, was a heroin user for six years and has been clean for almost two. She knows firsthand the barriers to getting a treatment bed when an addict is ready.

Her process to getting sober started with losing her son to the Department of Children and Families, but along the way there was a lot of waiting for open beds in rehab centers.