

# Virginia Sheriff's Office Breaks Stigma with Award-Winning Substance Abuse Recovery Program

*The award from the National Association of Counties highlights the Fairfax County, VA Sheriff's STAR Program, which reunites families and reduces recidivism.*

FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA, USA, June 2, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Fairfax County Sheriff's Office ([FCSO](#)) recently received national recognition for its innovative addiction treatment and recovery programs. An award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) spotlights the agency's efforts to provide meaningful support and recovery resources to those struggling with substance use disorders (SUDs).

In 2018, FCSO launched Striving to Achieve Recovery ([STAR](#)), a voluntary jail-based, peer-led program for people with SUDs that seeks to remove stigmas and reduce involvement in the criminal justice system.

The recovery-focused program has already helped more than 65 inmates address underlying trauma, restore dignity, provide hope, work toward family reunification, building the foundation for a future in recovery.

In 2020, FCSO added a Medication for Addiction Treatment (MAT) program for individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD), along with wraparound recovery support designed to help people transition back into the community after incarceration.

This FCSO program includes the following:

- The recognition of OUD as a chronic illness, requiring medical attention.



Greg (left), a current STAR participant, sits with Jon, a former STAR participant who now works as a peer recovery specialist with The Chris Atwood foundation and serves as a sponsor and mentor to Greg and others.

- Revised standard operating procedures for the agency.
- The use of validated SUDs screening tools and withdrawal protocols, starting at booking.
- Harm reduction strategies, and bridge medications like NARCAN® and SUBOXONE®.
- Counseling and peer support from people with lived experience.
- Workforce development to reduce stigma and increase opportunities for self-sufficiency.
- Enhanced release plans, including direct linkages to outpatient clinics and residential treatment centers.
- Transportation assistance.
- Recovery housing grants.
- Cell phones and backpacks filled with basic transitional items.



Fairfax County Sheriff's Office MAT participant receives daily dose of buprenorphine to treat his opioid use disorder.

“As one of the largest Sheriff’s Offices in Virginia, our mission is to provide a safe community for our residents, oversee the rehabilitation of our inmates, and reduce the rates of recidivism

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The success of these programs would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of our frontline deputies, healthcare workers, behavioral healthcare providers, and recovery specialists.”

*Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid*

among our jail population,” Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid explained. “The STAR and MAT programs were specifically designed to treat — not punish — the addiction. The success of these programs would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of our frontline deputies, as well as our top-notch team of healthcare workers, behavioral healthcare providers, and recovery specialists.”

According to a study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, an estimated 65% of the U.S. prison population has an SUD. Prior to landmark programs like MAT, only 11% of inmates had received treatment while incarcerated.

By contrast, the FCSO’s medical team treats an average of 14% of the jail population, daily, through the MAT program. From July 1, 2022, to mid-May 2023, more than 1,100 individuals engaged in the program and the accompanying wraparound services.

With support from its partners, FCSO has provided 75 recovery housing scholarships and 159 cell

phones to MAT participants reentering the community. The number of participants who have successfully connected to outpatient MAT services has increased by 25% over the last three years.

A report from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics found that 68% of released inmates were arrested again within three years, 79% within six years, and 83% within nine years. After five years, 60% of past STAR participants have returned to the Fairfax community and have not recidivated.

“This is not the easy way of running a law enforcement agency, but the impact of our programs can be measured through data, awards, and the individual stories from former inmates, who share their progress in recovery,” Kincaid continued. “We are proud of this recognition and dedicated to returning people to our community who are healthier and ready to write the next chapters in their lives.”

The recognition by NACo underscores FCSSO’s commitment to innovation in providing comprehensive care for those with addiction issues - and gives the agency a leadership position in law enforcement reform.

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More About the [Fairfax County Sheriff’s Office](#): Sheriff Stacey A. Kincaid and her deputies ensure the safety of, and provide the highest quality of service to, the residents of Fairfax County, Fairfax City and the towns of Herndon and Vienna by operating a secure and humane Adult Detention Center; providing security for the Courthouse, courtrooms and surrounding complex; and serving/executing civil process on behalf of the courts. In addition to these core functions, the Sheriff’s Office is actively engaged with the diverse communities it serves and has a workforce that reflects the great diversity of Fairfax County. The Sheriff’s vision is to be known as the most professionally run, economically efficient, innovative organization among its peers.

More About the National Association of Counties: NACo has established a consolidated family of affiliated subsidiaries to pursue and fulfill our vision of healthy, safe and vibrant counties across the United States. Our strategic focus is to strengthen the leadership, ingenuity and investments of county governments and our elected and appointed officials as well as our residents. NACo is owned by America’s county governments with oversight and governance by an executive



Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid visits the inmates participating in the STAR pilot program in 2018. Sheriff’s Office and Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board staff also pictured.

committee and board of directors.

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