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CAYUGA COUNTY

## Cayuga County seeks state funding for jail inmates' substance abuse treatment

Gwendolyn Craig [gwendolyn.craig@lee.net](mailto:gwendolyn.craig@lee.net) Feb 21, 2018 Updated 8 hrs ago



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AUBURN — The New York State Association of Counties wants the state to provide \$12.8 million annually to local governments for treatment and transition of county jail inmates tackling substance abuse disorders.

Those costs currently rest on counties' shoulders, and Cayuga County Community Services Director Ray Bizzari said officials have been lobbying for the state to take off some of the financial burden.

The matter came up before the Cayuga County Legislature's Ways and Means Committee Tuesday night, where local lawmakers considered a resolution supporting the association's request.

Legislator Andrew Dennison asked Bizzari how the county funds those programs now. Bizzari said an approximately \$30,000 grant from the state Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse pays for Vivitrol, a drug that can help treat drug and alcohol addiction. The county's mental health and jail budgets have been able to cover other related costs for now, but Bizzari said that will not be able to continue in the long run.

Legislators did not have an official cost to the county Tuesday night, but Bizzari added that about \$130,000 goes toward staffing for drug treatment services.

According to the resolution, studies have shown that inmates receiving treatment in jail are less likely to go back to jail. In Albany County, for example, the jail implements a heroin addiction recovery program to provide treatment to those incarcerated and support after release. The jail's recidivism rate dropped 28 percent.

With 51 percent of jails having no funding for treatment programs, the resolution seeks Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the state Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services "to help combat the heroin and opioid epidemic, save lives and reduce the rate of

recidivism, by providing state funding for the treatment and transition of incarcerated individuals with substance use disorders in our county jails."

The committee passed the resolution unanimously, with Legislator Tucker Whitman absent. The committee also passed a resolution hiring the New York City law firm Napoli Shkolnik PLLC to represent the county in litigation against opioid manufacturers. Cayuga County would join Onondaga County and about a dozen others on the class-action lawsuit.

Both resolutions will go to the full Legislature meeting at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 27 in the Sixth Floor Chambers of the Cayuga County Office Building, 160 Genesee St., Auburn.

***In other news:***

- Human Resources Administrator Michael Russell had significant housekeeping updates for legislators Tuesday, abolishing dozens of vacant county positions.

One resolution abolished all the positions associated with the former Cayuga County Nursing Home, which the Legislature decided to shut down in 2013. More than 90 full- and part-time positions were on the list.

A second resolution eliminated 11 vacant positions in the Department of Social Services. Russell said the spots had been empty for some time, and the department did not have particular need for them. Russell added that he will be going through other departments rosters to continue getting rid of unnecessary openings.

Staff writer Gwendolyn Craig can be reached at (315) 282-2237 or [gwendolyn.craig@lee.net](mailto:gwendolyn.craig@lee.net). Follow her on Twitter @gwendolynnn1.

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**Gwendolyn Craig**

County Government Reporter