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Grant approved will help Raleigh agency combat opioid epidemic

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by: [Michael Hyland](#)

Posted: Nov 18, 2019 / 06:37 PM EST / Updated: Nov 18, 2019 / 06:37 PM EST

RALEIGH, N.C. (WNCN) – Wake County commissioners approved a million-dollar grant Monday in an effort to help a Raleigh agency better address the opioid epidemic.

Healing Transitions is trying to raise nearly \$12 million to expand its men’s and women’s facilities in the capital city, adding beds as both locations are over capacity.

“The opioid crisis has hit a different demographic in our community, and so people who previously might not have come here are now coming because they’re in need of services,” said Chris Budnick, executive

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The agency provides long-term addiction treatment to people. It also serves as a location for people to stay overnight, often during extreme weather conditions.

Tracy Freeman first came to Healing Transitions in 2011, pleading with a judge during a hearing over child support to help her find a way to treat her addiction to cocaine and alcohol.

“If it had not been for Healing Transitions, I probably would have died,” said Freeman. “If I don’t get help, this is what I told the judge, I’m gonna die. If I have to return to this abandoned house, I’m gonna die.”

She says she’s been clean and sober for eight years and now works at Healing Transitions, helping other women.

The men’s and women’s facilities were originally designed to have 254 total beds. Since opening, the agency has increased that capacity to 300. However, on an average day, there are 315 people staying at Healing Transitions. That’s a 14-percent increase compared to two years ago, according to data provided by Healing Transitions.

Freeman said when she first came to the facility eight years ago, she doesn’t remember it being so crowded with people now sleeping on mats on the floor and in community rooms and classrooms.

“And, I don’t want to ever get to a point where our facility, who does get work already, get to a point where we’re not able to help,” she said.

The expansion plan calls for adding 110 beds at the men’s campus and 90 beds at the women’s campus. It also calls for renovating bathrooms and laundry facilities and additional common spaces.

Budnick cites not only the county’s explosive population growth in the last 20 years but also the impacts of the opioid epidemic.

“Sixty-six percent increase in Wake County’s population since 2001. The opioid crisis, we’ve had about 197-percent increase in opioid overdose deaths since 2013,” he pointed out.

Wake County commissioners voted unanimously in awarding the million-dollar grant for the women’s facility. Commissioners previously approved \$500,000 for the men’s campus. Board Chairwoman Jessica Holmes challenged the Raleigh City Council to match the million-dollar grant.

Healing Transitions is also seeking donations from the public in addition to government grant funding and support from area businesses, including the healthcare industry. To learn more about the capital campaign, [click here](#).

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