

TRANSCRIPT-VIDE/AUDIO with **Sam Sears, MD, director of physician services for OSF Behavioral Health**

Dr. Sears pointed out many healthy activities are limited during the pandemic but liquor stores are still open and street drugs are still readily available.

“So people are still having access to their vices with free time on their hands so with people who are at risk that’s an increased opportunity for things to go badly rather than opportunities for help and treatment.” (:23)

Sears said some people who are years into their sobriety are doing ok but others, not so much.

“People who were less solid in their recovery though, I have a lot of worry about them and then folks that were thinking about getting into recovery but haven’t started, the odds that they’re getting any help or movement toward recovery are very low over this time period which means it’s going to be a much harder journey for them then if they had been able to get started months ago.” (:24)

Sears says incredibly dangerous synthetic fentanyl-laced opioids have infected much of the street supply and it can have deadly consequences.

“That same effect that just got them a little bit high before is now putting them into respiratory failure or outright killing them. This has taken the lives of many individuals and put many more individuals into intensive care units or emergency rooms across the country and even here in our own communities.” (:23)

Dr. Sears says people with COVID-19 who have few to mild symptoms and want in-patient treatment for their addiction face challenges.

“Until last week or two, they really were having people housed on medical units until they were able to test negative for COVID before they could be transferred to mental health or substance abuse treatment programming.” (:15)