DELWARE
INNOVATIONS TO ADDRESS ADDICTION
Eight Innovative Solutions that are Transforming Addiction Prevention, Treatment and Recovery
INNOVATION NOW

Innovation Now re-imagines how we can address addiction as a nation. A project of Addiction Policy Forum, the initiative showcases innovative programs and interventions from every sector that are actively transforming the field of addiction across the nation.

Many thanks to our partners for their support.

• Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA)
• Faces & Voice of Recovery (FAVOR)
• The National District Attorneys Association (NDAA)
• The National Association for Children of Addiction (NACoA)
• Young People in Recovery (YPR)
• The Police, Treatment, and Community Collaborative (PTACC)
• Casey Family Programs
• Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC)

By engaging entrepreneurs, leaders, healthcare providers, and experts across the country, the Innovation Now initiative aims to increase transformative ideas to prevent and treat substance use disorders and support recovery.
Dear Reader,

Delaware is known as the First State. But the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention currently ranks it fifth in the nation for its drug overdose rate. A steady stream of negative news headlines makes it seem like drug misuse, and particularly the opioid crisis, is out of control.

Yet this little state is also making big inroads in confronting its challenges. That’s because imaginative innovators all around Delaware are trying new approaches to address their shared problems. And that’s giving hope to communities and families impacted by this disorder.

The Innovations Now initiative recognizes innovators and leaders across the multiple sectors needed at the table to address addiction—prevention, treatment, recovery, child welfare, criminal justice, law enforcement and health professionals—leaders who are creating solutions and driving change. As the founder of Addiction Policy Forum, it’s my pleasure to work with patients, families, community members, and state and local leaders who are passionate about solving addiction. As a person whose family has been devastated by this disease, I share the Addiction Policy Forum’s mission to eliminate addiction as a major health problem.

It’s an honor to recognize these innovators in Delaware who are leading the way. In the following pages, you’ll learn about their outstanding work that’s improving our response to addiction and saving lives.

Jessica Hulsey Nickel
Founder,
Addiction Policy Forum
AtTAcK ADDICTION
STATEWIDE
Sometimes, something terrible leads to something beautiful. Just ask Don and Jeanne Keister. In December 2012, their son Tyler suffered an accidental heroin overdose. “As I stood in the hospital watching him on life support, I thought this would be an opportunity to help others,” Don recalls. “So others wouldn’t have to go through what we were going through, and also to help those in recovery and their families.”

Tyler didn’t survive. But his loss ignited a spark, and in February 2013 AtTAcK Addiction was born. “TAK” represents Tyler’s initials. The non-profit group educates the public about addiction, works to remove the stigma often associated with it, and supports both people in recovery and their loved ones.

There are no employees; it’s run entirely by volunteers. Many, like the Keisters, have lost a family member to the illness. That shared experience not only helps them work through their shared loss, but it also creates a bond that empowers them to help others. You can hear the passion and commitment in their voices as they talk about the group’s wide array of projects. In fact, name a topic and AtTAcK Addiction is involved in it. Housing? They have four recovery houses; some are free and others offer greatly reduced rent. Awareness? There’s a monthly Reality Tour, plus speaking engagements. Advocacy? The group advocated for and contributed to the passage of a Good Samaritan law that’s considered model legislation for other states. It also provides college scholarships, plus works with parents and athletic teams. Even AtTAcK Addiction’s one annual fundraising event, a 5K race, is a bright spot, bringing people together with more than 3,200 participants in 2019.

Community is very important to the group. “We hold meetings each month and we can have up to 70 people,” says board member Karl Fischer. “We provide all types of support, including grief counseling. They come because they want to see action, and we are action oriented. We have family members and people in recovery, too. It lets them know that they aren’t alone.”

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO RECOVERY SUPPORT

A community that is recovery ready provides the entire continuum of support for people in or seeking recovery. A community focused on recovery also promotes prevention by having a variety of substance-free community events and activities to promote health and well-being for all ages. Twenty-three million Americans are in recovery from a substance use disorder today.
It’s a disease of shame for the person misusing drugs and for the family. We don’t want people to be ashamed of their use or of their loved ones because it is a disease.

– Jeanne Keister
AtTAcK Addiction’s impact is especially felt in changing public understanding of addiction and removing the stigma that’s too often attached to it. “It’s a disease of shame for the person misusing drugs and for the family,” Keister notes. “We don’t want people to be ashamed of their use or of their loved ones because it is a disease.”

“I sit in awe of all of these people,” says pharmacist and advisory board member Bill Lynch. “This group drives the substance use disorder agenda in Delaware.” And their voice is heard loud and clear in the state capitol. “I credit AtTAcK Addiction for helping me understand the lived experiences of how this disease impacts families, employers, and the community,” adds fellow advisory board member Rita Landgraf, who served as Delaware’s Secretary of Health and Human Services from 2009-2017. “The best policies are created by people who have been impacted the most. We need that voice.”

Besides reaching so many people around the First State, the group also helps each other heal. Says Dave Humes, who lost his son to addiction in May 2012, “We use the adopted phrase of ‘we, not I.’ There is chemistry in sports and there is chemistry in our organization. We draw on each other’s strengths.”

Tyler’s mother Jeanne puts it more simply: “These people are family. They have saved us.”

**NUMBERS:**

- Started in February 2013.
- The annual 5k race fundraiser has grown from 950 participants in 2013 to over 3,200 in 2019.
- About 70 people attend the group’s monthly meeting.

**SUMMARY:**

- AtTAcK Addiction educates the public about addiction, works to remove the stigma associated with it, and supports both people in recovery and their loved ones.
- It sponsors recovery houses, provides scholarships and community education, and conducts advocacy.
- AtTAcK Addiction is now recognized as “driving the substance use disorder agenda” in Delaware.
HOPE STREET
NEWPORT, DE
Something new arrived on the recovery scene on April 21, 2016. That was the day Hope Street began operating. Its mission includes the goal of giving families a blueprint for hope from addiction. But it gives much more than that.

It gives a female voice to the recovery process.

“We wanted to advocate for female recovery housing,” says Executive Director Erin Goldner. “We wanted to help motivate people. People need hope. People are dying and people are suffering. And Hope Street offers hope.”

In 2016, Goldner says there were “a lot of policy disconnects.” People were in denial. It was as if no one wanted to take responsibility. “I came across a lot of pregnant women who were addicted. They were going through a lot and often felt judgment within the community and healthcare system. They told me, ‘We needed a better solution, we need a safe place to go.’”

Hope Street provides women warm, safe, welcoming and non-judgmental environments while they undergo treatment. Its focus is on trauma-informed care. Early intervention is an important part of the organization. That includes linking people to support services, providing short-term housing, and offering leadership programs. The group is actively involved in building communities, providing advocacy and peer support, and creating a sanctuary for women.

“The woman’s story is a little different from a guy’s story,” Goldner explains. “Women may not feel safe because of things like domestic violence or losing their parental rights. So, they’re often silenced. That makes them feel like their voice doesn’t matter, like they’re pushed in a corner with options.”

Goldner understands those feelings all too well. She’s in long-term recovery herself and says she had given up at one point and thought she would wind up on the street, in jail, or dead. But she got in treatment and turned her life around. Now, she uses her experience to help other women.

She says it’s hard to count the number of women Hope Street has reached; she talks to and helps at least one new person every week. Take the story of GG, for instance: “I met her a few times. Her mother had come to me because she knew of my work. GG was pregnant (she now has three kids). She was someone who was going to die and so was her husband. In fact, we weren’t sure if she was going to make it. She’s now in recovery and cleared of HCV.”

“Another girl gave birth in my car because she felt safe there,” Goldner adds. “She was young and had a lot of issues. Now she has full custody of her kids, she’s been in recovery for two years, and is the manager of a restaurant.”

Goldner doesn’t call the people Hope Street reaches clients; she refers to them simply as friends. And that
personal, friendly approach is producing amazing results. “You help them discover more about themselves. That makes people feel happy and empowered. The color returns to their face and they start to smile. There’s a simple reason for it. It’s because we help people dream again.”

**NUMBERS:**

- Began operating on April 21, 2016.
- The group talks to one new person each week.

**SUMMARY:**

- The mission of Hope street is to give families a blueprint for hope from addiction, to advocate for holistic community-based treatment, and to put a face on recovery while ensuring all lives are treated with respect and dignity.
- The focus is on trauma-informed care.
- Its early intervention links people to support services, short-term housing, and leadership programs.
- The group is actively involved in building communities, providing advocacy and peer support, and creating a sanctuary for women.
You help them discover more about themselves. That makes people feel happy and empowered. The color returns to their face and they start to smile. There’s a simple reason for it. It’s because we help people dream again.

– Erin Goldner
The transition from prison to the community can be rough. Freedom brings more problems than most of us imagine, including increased chances for drug misuse. The Wilmington Hope Commission Winner’s Circle understands successful reentry involves as much support as possible.

The Hope Commission is a nine-to-twelve month program that coincides with probation. It assists individuals coming home from prison with resources that include housing and job readiness and prepares them to be self-dependent.

The Winner’s Circle is a vitally important aspect of that program. “These guys coming home go through a lot,” says peer support specialist Kontal Copeland. “They may not have someone to talk to in their circle of friends or someone who has been where they are.” Having been incarcerated himself, Copeland fully understands the challenges.

Unlike many other groups, Winner’s Circle has no curriculum. It’s a therapeutic group and is open to the public. The only requirement to attend is that each participant must have been formerly incarcerated. The hour-long session is offered every Friday.

About 20 people typically attend each Winner’s Circle meeting. It’s an intimate gathering with participants sitting in a circle. Some men know each other from the streets and previous incarceration. Others are acquainted as neighbors. That personal connection is an essential ingredient in the Winner’s Circle success, especially for men who are tempted to misuse drugs because of stress.

Many have a history of drug use; because they’re on probation, they could go back to jail for using. “We’re upfront with them,” Copeland says. “We don’t sugarcoat it. We talk freely about drugs and all their problems. It reminds them that they’re not alone. It also gives them coping options. People tend to really open up in this group. Sometimes, you may even see tears.”

Wilmington Hope Commission holds a ceremony every July for those who’ve completed the program.

Notable community members attend the ceremony. Copeland says graduates frequently return to Winner’s Circle meetings to tell their stories or for support. The Commission also follows up with program graduates at the 30, 60, and 180-day points.
We’re upfront with them. We don’t sugarcoat it. We talk freely about drugs and all their problems. It reminds them that they’re not alone. It also gives them coping options. People tend to really open up in this group. Sometimes, you may even see tears.

– Kontal Copeland
“One guy that I knew on the streets came through the program,” remembers Copeland. “He was still struggling with his addiction. He found help here. Now he’s working at a major hospital. We helped him to get the job. It’s a job he wouldn’t normally have access to. Seeing his transition is great. It’s so gratifying to see where people are in life now.”

NUMBERS:

- The Hope Commission is a nine-to-twelve month program that coincides with probation.
- It consists of a one-hour meeting each week.
- Approximately 20 people attend each meeting.

SUMMARY:

- The Winner’s Circle is one of many services the Wilmington Hope Commission offers to individuals being released from incarceration.
- The Winner’s Circle is a peer-led, peer-driven support group designed to address the special needs of formerly incarcerated men and women.
- The Winner’s Circle draws on the power of example, as well as the hope and motivation that one person in transition can offer to another.
HERO HELP
NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DE
Sometimes, the challenge isn’t knowing what to do. It’s figuring out how to do it.

A few years ago, New Castle County was one of the hardest-hit counties for property crime. At the same time, the rate of overdoses in the community also continued to rise. It didn’t take long for law enforcement to realize that many of those arrested for property crimes also were dealing with a substance use disorder. They wanted to assist those people in getting help and also decrease crime. But how?

Former Police Chief E.M. Setting had heard about the Angel program in Massachusetts, a model that assists by providing treatment in lieu of arrest. He thought it was worth a closer look. And so, HERO HELP was launched in May 2016. Major Robert McLucas was tasked as the project’s coordinator.

“We took the basic idea of opening the doors of the police department 24/7 to anyone who suffers from any form of a substance use disorder,” McLucas says. “We wanted to help in more ways. We have data. We know nearly instantly about an overdose, such as who experienced it, where they were located, how many times they’ve overdosed.” They built a team of a uniformed police officer, a registered nurse who specializes in addiction, and a civilian coordinator. Using non-fatal overdose data from the New Castle County Police Department Crime Analysis Unit, outreach personnel identify individuals at high risk of fatal overdose and engage them in addiction treatment services, preventing future overdoses and empowering the community to affect change.

The HERO HELP Program is officially designated as a Delaware Community-Based Naloxone Access Program, allowing it to train high-risk individuals, their family members

INNOVATIONS IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSES TO ADDICTION

First responders, law enforcement and criminal justice personnel are increasingly at the center of the addiction issue—from being first at the scene of an overdose to responding to the lack of resources and limited treatment options for individuals with substance use disorders who are in our jails and criminal justice systems.

About 63 percent of people in jail, 58 percent of people in state prison, and 45 percent of people in federal prison have substance use disorders, compared to just 5 percent of the U.S. adult population.* Data indicates that law enforcement and probation see an increasing number of individuals struggling with addiction. Criminal justice systems equipped with training, services and early detection tools create opportunities to stop the progression of the disease. Contact with the justice system often provides an opportunity to overcome the resistance to seeking treatment that is often a symptom of the disease of addiction.

HERO HELP.
addiction assistance

DON'T LET YOUR PAST STEAL YOUR FUTURE
and loved ones in the safe use and storage of naloxone and provide a free naloxone kit at no cost.

“Our goal is to stop the deaths, get people the help they need and reduce crime,” adds Major McLucas. “We give families hope that resources are available and that someone can help their loved one break through their addiction in lieu of arrest.”

Eligibility for participation in the program largely depends on a person’s criminal history. Once someone is accepted, the wheels begin spinning. “Treatment is immediate,” explains police Lieutenant Jake Andrews. “If someone is waiting weeks and months to get into treatment, we may miss the opportunity to engage them in treatment.”

Transportation to and from treatment is provided when needed. No one is turned away from help; even if the person isn’t eligible to formally receive assistance, referrals are still made.

In 2017, the New Castle County Police Department was awarded the Combating Opioid Overdose through Community Intervention Initiative award through the University of Baltimore. As a result of that funding, the HERO HELP program hired Dan Maas as the full-time coordinator on March 1, 2018, and the number of admissions increased from 70 (between May 2016 through February 2018) to a total of 243 by March 14, 2019. “We understand that relapse is part of recovery,” Maas points out. “We meet people where they are and do our best to address the social mitigating factors that often hinder the recovery process.”

HERO HELP personnel offer addiction assistance in lieu of arrest for prostitution and human trafficking cases as well. Kate Lott, RN, who runs the only state-funded detox facility in New Castle County remembers a mother who’d been arrested during a prostitution operation. Lott assured the mother that HERO HELP would give her the opportunity to address her addiction and mental health issues and find a new way to live. Major McLucas concludes, “Most of the individuals we arrest for property crimes are struggling with addiction; but, not all of those struggling with addiction are criminals. HERO HELP provides police officers with another tool to help Delawareans impacted by addiction.”
NUMBERS:

- Program began in May 2016.
- Enrolled 259 individuals between May 1, 2016 and May 1, 2019.
- There have been 65 non-fatal overdose outreach initiatives, 56 individuals engaged in treatment.
- 120 individuals trained in the usage and storage of naloxone.

SUMMARY:

- HERO HELP is a collaboration between the New Castle County Division of Police, the Delaware Department of Justice and the State Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health to provide drug and/or alcohol addiction treatment to qualifying adults, regardless of insurance status.
- The New Castle County Police Department opens its doors to those who are seeking help, and officers offer it to individuals in lieu of an immediate arrest for lesser crimes.
- The goal of HERO HELP is to reach beyond criminal arrests in order to combat addiction and related crime.
- The HERO HELP Program conducts non-fatal overdose outreach, which partners the HERO HELP Coordinator with a police officer and licensed nurse to engage individuals.
Most of the individuals we arrest for property crimes are struggling with addiction; but, not all of those struggling with addiction are criminals. HERO HELP provides police officers with another tool to help Delawareans impacted by addiction.

– Major McLucas
NEW EXPECTATIONS
NEWPORT, DE
It can be a nightmare scenario: facing incarceration while pregnant. It’s even harder for women who misuse drugs. They have the almost impossible task of simultaneously dealing with legal issues, struggling with addiction, and preparing for their baby’s arrival. It’s so overwhelming, it can feel like there’s no hope.

But New Expectations is changing that bleak situation. It provides an alternative to incarceration for justice-involved women in non-violent situations who are pregnant.

“Oftentimes, judges were sentencing pregnant women to jail if they tested positive for substances, mostly for the sake of the unborn child,” says Frances Marti, Regional Director for Behavioral Health for Connections Community Support Programs. However, separating mother and child immediately after birth hurts the woman’s chances for overcoming her addiction, and is harmful to the baby’s development as well. So, Delaware officials came up with a new way.

New Expectations allows the woman to receive intensive treatment and avoid jail time while living in a home that’s overseen by Corrections Department staffers.

The program began in November 2014. The group home provides 17 beds in 9 rooms. Treatment is available a few minutes away. Additionally, women participate in individual and group sessions, attend first-time mother classes and receive prenatal care. Medication-assisted treatment is also available, as well as cognitive behavioral therapy for those who have experienced trauma.

Women can stay at New Expectations until their baby is six months-old, and their child stays with them the entire time. “That’s important because it gives women the chance to bond with their baby and develop a relationship,” notes Diane Tisdel, New Expectation’s project director. “When a woman gives birth in prison, the baby is taken away from the mother. That immediately causes problems for both the mother and the child.”

There are three phases to the program. In the first phase, participants gradually receive increasing levels of freedom as they progress. Phase two consists of learning life skills, such as budgeting. In phase three, which is work release, they are responsible for getting themselves to appointments.

Many women are hesitant about the program when they first enter the house. But that quickly changes and when their time is up, many don’t want to leave. Tisdel remembers Erin’s experience. “When I met her, I remember thinking, ‘This is going to be rough.’ Erin went against the grain and definitely gave us a run for our money. She wasn’t a first-time mom, but this was the first time she was really going to care for a child. Her son was in the care of her parents and she didn’t have the greatest relationship with them. This program was an opportunity to rekindle that.”
We’ve had every story come through our doors. We’ve had women who were going to put their baby up for adoption. We’ve had twins. We’ve had women call the program after completion because they were struggling and needed someone to talk to. Once women join the New Expectations family, because New Expectations is a family, we do all we can to help them.

– Frances Marti
“In the beginning, Erin always seemed to have issues with other residents. Then one day a light bulb went off inside her. She just changed and became a model participant from that time on. After completing treatment, Erin wanted to give back. So she returned to tell her story. We put her through a peer mentoring program. Now she has a full-time job at a clinic. She says she doesn’t know what she would have done without the program."

“We’ve had every story come through our doors,” Marti concludes. “We’ve had women who were going to put their baby up for adoption. We’ve had twins. We’ve had women call the program after completion because they were struggling and needed someone to talk to. Once women join the New Expectations family, because New Expectations is a family, we do all we can to help them.”

**NUMBERS:**

- Program began in November 2014.
- The group home has 17 beds in 9 rooms.
- Women can stay at New Expectations until their baby is six months old, and the child stays with them.
- Over 90 women have gone through the program

**SUMMARY:**

- New Expectations is a program for justice-involved women who are pregnant. It is an alternative to incarceration.
- It allows pregnant women to receive intensive treatment while living in a facility that’s overseen by Corrections Department staffers.
- Besides treatment, women also participate in individual and group sessions, attend first-time mother classes, and receive prenatal care.
- New Expectations is a partnership between Connections Community Support Programs and the Delaware Department of Correction.
DELAWARE PREVENTION COALITION
WILMINGTON, DE
There was no denying it: violence in Delaware was going from bad to worse. A *Newsweek* article called Wilmington “MurderTown USA.” Whenever folks discussed the reasons for the trouble, it always turned to the realization that drug misuse, particularly opioids, was steadily rising.

“Drugs are often a root cause of violence,” explains community prevention coordinator Keith Taylor. “Unfortunately, it’s an everyday occurrence for many of our youth.”

So the Delaware Prevention Coalition was created to do something about it. The grant-funded program is based out of the West End Neighborhood House and Bellevue Community Center. It works with schools, civic groups, and faith-based organizations to determine the needs of the community and take action. It conducts a community-needs assessment every year and holds evidence-based programs in all schools. Throughout New Castle County, it serves over 1,000 students.

The coalition is split into two groups: the adult and youth coalitions. Each coalition meets monthly and both meet together quarterly. A youth coalition representative always attends each adult meeting.

The youth coalition conducts prevention activities and shares information about drug, alcohol and tobacco prevention to participating groups. Fifteen youth leaders between 6th to 12th grade are selected. “They are people who are looking to make a change in their communities,” explains Antwain Flowers, the Coalition’s community prevention director. They receive a small stipend for their efforts. Many of them see substance misuse in their homes. “Being a part of the Coalition gives them the knowledge, which they then share with their parents.”

**INNOVATIONS TO PREVENT SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER**

Effective prevention contributes to significant societal cost-savings and dramatically reduces the prevalence of both substance use and mental illness. The best way to prevent the development of substance use disorders is to delay the age of drug and alcohol use initiation while the adolescent brain is still developing. It is also critical to intervene early when a person is misusing substances so that risky use does not progress into an addiction.

Evidence-based prevention programs prevent or delay the onset of substance use as well as other behavioral health problems. Prevention should also address individual and environmental factors that contribute to use disorders.
We show them how their future can be impacted by misusing drugs and alcohol, and the benefits they can achieve from living without them.

– Keith Taylor
Leaders are trained in prevention and help implement prevention strategies in the community. For example, youth leaders are currently making plans with the Drug Enforcement Agency to hold a summit at a local elementary school. They also work with community partners to conduct park scans, which includes better lighting and signage in the parks, back to school events, No Limit Mentoring groups, and prevention workshops.

A key feature of the program is showing kids things that don’t involve drugs and alcohol. “We take them on college tours,” Taylor points out. “We show them how their future can be impacted by misusing drugs and alcohol, and the benefits they can achieve from living without them.”

The adult coalition consists of 12 community sectors, including council people, teachers, and parents.

When asked to describe the positive impact the Coalition is making on young people, Taylor and Flowers quickly recount a lot of names. There’s Hannah, who’s now going off to college. And Jada, who was instrumental in getting more youth involved. There’s Chanel who “volunteers all the time.” They are among the many young people who empower the Coalition to keep working to make a difference for the next generation in Delaware.

**NUMBERS:**

- 60 youth coalition members.
- Has 15 youth leaders.
- Serves over 1,000 kids in New Castle County.

**SUMMARY:**

- The Delaware Prevention Coalition works with schools, civic groups, and faith-based organizations to determine community needs.
- It conducts an assessment every year and holds evidence-based programs in all schools.
- The Coalition is split into two groups: the adult and youth coalitions. Each coalition meets monthly and the two also meet together quarterly. A youth coalition member always attends the adult meetings.
Early intervention can make all the difference in getting treatment for someone suffering from a substance use disorder (SUD). Delaware’s Christiana Care Health System was a pioneer in utilizing peers in recovery to engage patients while they are in the hospital with the primary objective of assisting those interested in treatment for their SUD.

Founded by Dr. Terry Horton, Project Engage started over ten years ago on a trial basis in partnership with a community drug treatment provider and a single peer counselor, Engagement Specialist, embedded in Wilmington Hospital. The results were encouraging and the program was embraced by both staff and patients. The program was expanded to Christiana Hospital in 2012 and social work support was added to facilitate discharge planning. Today with their partner, Connections Community Support Programs, Inc., they have a team of 15 caregivers that successfully connected over 800 patients into treatment for their SUD last year. Also, a recent analysis shows a reduction in readmission rates for Emergency Department (ED) patients connected to SUD treatment.

“The value to getting the individual into treatment is immeasurable,” says Dr. Terry Horton, Project Engage’s Medical Director. “The embedded Engagement Specialists provide an important benefit. The shame and guilt felt by people battling addiction are immense. So Engagement Specialists act as recovery ambassadors and break down barriers. By being part of the team, they help to remove stigma.”

Most recently Project Engage was expanded to provide 24/7 coverage in three EDs and

**INNOVATIONS IN HEALTHCARE**

It is crucial for people to have access to a system of care that has adequate capacity to provide all levels of treatment and address all levels of severity for substance use disorders.

In 2016, according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 63,000 Delaware residents had a substance use disorder. Of those, 21,000 did not receive treatment from a specialty substance use disorder treatment provider.* Delays in treatment access can mean an increased risk for death and other harms associated with substance misuse.

Substance use disorders (SUDs) remain one of the only illnesses that is treated outside of general health care systems. Because of this, there is very little, if any, communication between specialty SUD treatment providers and primary care doctors. This affects the overall quality of care and health outcomes of the patient.

Evidence-based SUD treatment integrated into healthcare systems helps to close the gap between the number of people who need treatment for an SUD and the number of people who actually receive it.

The innovations featured in this section show promise for accelerating our progress in improving treatment access and quality of care patients.

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– Dr. Terry Horton, Project Engage’s Medical Director
participate in a pilot program with ED providers to offer medication-assisted treatment (MAT) to patients in opioid withdrawal. Previously, patients were sent to detox for their opioid use disorder. “Now they can receive an induction in the emergency room,” Dr. Horton explains.

Project Engage is also a key part of Christiana Care’s Opioid Withdrawal Pathway implemented in 2015. The Pathway screens for and identifies patients who are in withdrawal. “People were leaving before treatment was initiated,” Dr. Horton says. “We didn’t want to lose the opportunity to reach them while they’re here. So we ask them on the front end, ‘Do you use heroin or prescription drugs? Do you get sick if you don’t?’ About five patients every day say ‘yes.’ We see all sorts of medical issues, such as a 101% increase in the number of spinal infections and endocarditis directly related to drug use. Once they’re identified, we can then treat those conditions as well in addition to helping them engage into ongoing drug treatment.”

Project Engage’s approach keeps producing results. About 50% of the patients engaged are referred to SUD treatment and over 70% of those patients are successfully connected to care. With the expansion to 24/7 coverage in the ED the number of engagements conducted each year is growing from 2,000 to 3,000. Over 10,000 patients have been served since Project Engage’s inception.

Dr. Horton says he recently received a letter from a mother whose son lost his battle with addiction. “The young man had a lot of medical problems as a result of his addiction. His mother wrote, ‘Thank you and his nursing staff for treating my son with dignity and
compassion, and for your hard work and dedication. This should be the gold standard for how to care for someone with an addiction.’ A letter like that will make you tearful. This is a fatal disease. It's more like cancer than a crime. It's a medical condition. The important thing is that because this young man experienced care with dignity, the mother can recover in her grief.”

And that mother’s wish is also coming true. Project Engage, “the gold standard,” is now being shared widely with other medical centers throughout the country.

**NUMBERS:**

- Started over 10 years ago.
- Saw on 800 patients in 2018.
- More than 10,000 patients have been helped since the program started.

**SUMMARY:**

- Project Engage is an early intervention and referral to substance use disorder treatment program designed to help hospital patients who may be struggling with alcohol or drug use.
- Project Engage integrates peers in recovery, who are called Engagement Specialists, into the clinical setting in the hospital to meet with patients at their bedside about their alcohol and/or drug use.
- The concept is to identify individuals at a reachable moment in the hospitals, and to increase access to treatment for their substance use disorder through facilitated referrals.
- Project Engage is a collaboration between Connections Community Support Programs, Inc. and Christiana Care Health System.
DELAWARE START
STATEWIDE
Steering through the myriad of services available to treat a substance use disorder can feel like running in a maze. It’s complex, complicated and sometimes feels downright scary.

Which is why the First State launched the Delaware START (Substance Use Treatment and Recovery Transformation) Initiative. The goal is to engage more Delawareans suffering from substance use disorder in treatment, while also meeting their accompanying needs for housing employment, education, and other wraparound services. Through START, the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) is working with key stakeholders across the state, including treatment providers, hospitals, primary care providers, and other state agencies to foster systemwide improvements to engaging in treatment.

The new system of care is based on a framework that measures client outcomes and will ensure support through certified peer recovery specialists who meet with individuals wherever they connect with the system and help them navigate and stay engaged in their own care. In addition, the Delaware Treatment and Referral Network (DTRN) allows Delaware health care providers seeking substance use disorder treatment or mental health services for their patients to make an online referral.

“Ensuring there are seamless transitions from one level of care to the next, while also having a peer with lived experience helping them to navigate the system will help individuals suffering from addiction begin their road to recovery,” says Kristen Rego, START project director.

Its small size also makes Delaware uniquely situated for this type of initiative. Through funding from SAMHSA, Delaware is implementing a statewide quality improvement learning collaborative. Through the collaborative, system stakeholders are developing workflows and case management systems in order to provide innovative and rapid-response services statewide.

“We are so thankful for all of our providers who have partnered with us in this initiative,” says Elizabeth Romero, Director of DSAMH. “Their efforts are essential in creating a system of care that is high-quality, comprehensive, coordinated, evidence-based and person-centered.”

Delaware START aims to achieve specific outcome indicators, including decreasing overdose deaths, improving the well-being of those suffering from substance use disorders and their families, and helping communities thrive.
Ensuring there are seamless transitions from one level of care to the next, while also having a peer with lived experience helping them to navigate the system will help individuals suffering from addiction begin their road to recovery.

– Kristen Rego, START project director
The gateway to care has multiple points of entry.

24/7 peer support is there from the beginning.

Level-of-care assessment and personalized treatment referral happens instantly.

Treatment can take many forms.

Social services meet other life needs.

Goal setting • Housing • Transportation • Employment • Activities for daily living

Post-treatment screening leads to community services referral.

Reentry to community, with ongoing care.
START IS AN INTERCONNECTED SYSTEM OF CARE THAT KEEPS PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLE WITH ADDICTION ON THE PATH TO HEALTHY LIFE.
By using data to recognize where there are opportunities in the system and by uniting stakeholders in one collaborative, they can develop relationships at all levels of care to make warm hand-offs and referrals easier.

By having a system in place, and by utilizing peer support teams for support, Delaware START is making the treatment system less complex, less complicated, and much easier to navigate for those who need help most of all.

**NUMBERS:**

- Initiative launched in October 2018.
- Engaged 12 treatment providers, 6 hospital systems, 4 IMDs, 3 FQHCs, and one peer support recovery provider in quality improvement learning collaborative.
- Expected to engage and treat more than 900 new clients using certified recovery peers.

**SUMMARY:**

- The Delaware START (Substance Use Treatment and Recovery Transformation) Initiative’s goal is to transform the substance use treatment system and increase access to care.
- START works with treatment providers, hospitals, primary care providers, other state government agencies and partners to foster system wide to improvements in treatment and engagement.
- People at multiple entry points are connecting to peer support and followed throughout their recovery.
DRIVING CHANGE

Imagine a world where these promising innovations are accelerated, scaled up, and accessible to the communities most in need. How many more lives could we save if we took the best, brightest and most innovative ideas to scale nationwide? Together we can solve this by shining a light on high-impact innovative solutions and helping to make sure they’re adopted across the country.

Innovation Now

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