

DAILY TIMES


TODAY'S WEATHER
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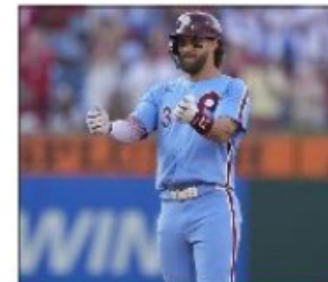
HELP AT ALL HOURS



Dr. Jaakko Lappalanien, MVP's medical director, left, with Brian Corson, founder and CEO of MVP Recovery, in the medical office at the 2200 Providence Ave., Chester site.

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S.T.A.R. program, a 24/7 mental health stabilization center, up and running for anyone in need, Page 3



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Upper Chi cops want to know if you can help ID these two



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First look at holiday community events in Delco

S.T.A.R PROGRAM

MVP opens Delco's first 24/7 mental health center

In less than a month, 15 people have been helped

By Kathleen E. Carey
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Delaware County saw its first 24-hour, seven-day-a-week mental health urgent care open the day after Memorial Day, and it's already having impact in an area the community needs most.

"We've seen 15 clients come through," Brian Corson, founder and CEO of MVP Recovery, said. "And 13 of the 15 have all been after hours so it's really great having that 24/7 ... We're really excited here to be able to step up and fill this gap of behavioral health."

The MVP Recovery S.T.A.R. — Stabilization-Triage-Assessment-Referral — Program started May 28 and provides a place for those needing mental health care, whether or not they have substance abuse issues. Corson described it as a one-stop wrap-around services available any time of the day.

So far, Corson said, about 60% of those coming to the S.T.A.R. Program have had substance abuse issues and 40% have not.

"What this is doing is it's removing every barrier possible but also what it's doing is it's alleviating the overuse and overstress of our limited emergency rooms in the county," Corson said,



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MVP Recovery at 2200 Providence Ave. in Chester is also the location of the S.T.A.R. program, a 24/7 mental health stabilization center. "We're really excited here to be able to step up and fill this gap of behavioral health," says Brian Corson, founder and CEO of MVP Recovery.

explaining that many who seek treatment for mental health go to the emergency room, which is already backed up. "Now, all of a sudden, we have a behavioral health urgent care to fill that gap. We can divert clients to here to better support them, get them the care they need expedited."

And, there's another plus. "When individuals walk in here, there is no judgment," Corson said. "There is no stigma. This is what we do. This is who we serve."

'Remove the barriers'

Dr. Jaakko Lappalanien, MVP's medical director, coordinates the center's Medication-Assisted Treatment, which uses medicines such as methadone, Vivitrol and

Suboxone in combination with counseling and other behavioral therapies to treat substance use disorder.

Dr. L, as Lappalanien is called at the center, does an assessment of people who come to see what would best address their need. He's also overseeing the 24/7 psychiatric services.

"Most clinics usually just give methadone but we have the mental health aspect," he said. "Most of our clients have some kind of mental health issues — about 95% — ranging from a minor ... depression all the way to severe mental illness."

From his work in the field of substance-use disorder, Corson said that often times, behavioral health is fragmented.



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Dr. Jaakko Lappalanien, MVP's medical director, left, with Brian Corson, founder and CEO of MVP Recovery, in the medical office at the 2200 Providence Ave., Chester, site.



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S.T.A.R. Program staff members want the 24/7 behavioral care to be nonjudgmental and friendly.

"It's so important to have it all in one ... and remove the barriers because clients are facing both issues," he emphasized.

Corson explained that if someone is a harm to someone else or themselves, they

need to be treated at a crisis center.

"But, it's for that in between who say, 'Hey, I'm not going to hurt myself but I think if I stay in this position, I might get to that point,'" he said.

Corson provided a scenario of how the S.T.A.R. Program works:

"Chester police bring people in 1 a.m. in the morning; somebody was at 22nd and Edgmont, mental health issues, no purpose in locking them up," Corson said. "We'll bring them in here."

Anyone needing services or knowing of someone needing services — substance use or behavioral or juvenile — can also call 1-855-MVP-2410 (687-2410) any minute of the day or night.

There's two reclining chairs in the S.T.A.R. room that lay back or stay seated, whichever the person chooses.

"We have blankets, we have pillows, we have Netflix on the TV," Corson said. "What happens in our CRS, we'll sit here with them, talk with them."

The nurse and medical team sits in an adjacent room to observe.

"We can vitals, we can do breathalyzer," he said, explaining that some treatment centers won't accept patients until their levels are a certain range.

"It's like identifying all of these barriers that we can remove," Corson said. "And the coolest thing ... is the fact that you just come in and you ask for help. There's no question of what's your insurance. You can have Medicaid, Medicare, commercial or no insurance.

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Center

FROM PAGE 3

We're here to help."

'Lowers the stigma'

Stacie Nawn, MVP regional director, helped create the program with Lappalanien.

"I think providing the environment that lowers the stigma is what's huge," she said. "Having that person that's been through it themselves, provides them the hope and helps with the de-escalation to get them to the next stage of whatever that might be."

In an environment of increasing need and decreasing resources, Nawn said she designed the program to help anyone who walks through the door, in a friendly way.

"We don't want to feel institutionalized," she said. "We don't want them to feel judgment."

She said that sometimes a person misses their psychiatrist appointment and are then put on a wait list for a month.

In the meantime, they still need their stabilizing medications that are low or have run out. They can come to the S.T.A.R. Program and they will be assessed and if needed, medications will be provided from off-site local pharmacies.

Corson said the availability for inpatient beds for those needing mental health care is limited.

"So to be able to have this ... where an individual can stay with us up to 23 hours while we get those resources, we literally have the whole closet in there filled with food and snacks," he said. "We have Band-Aids. We have feminine hygiene and we have toothbrushes, really trying to address every need from beginning to end and then ensuring the after-care afterwards so they are set up to succeed."

'Preemptive, proactive'

They even can provide transportation for people to get to the center through a medical lift that will bring individuals to the S.T.A.R. center.

"This is a preemptive, proactive program," Corson said. "Why wait until someone needs an ER? Why wait until someone harms themselves or overdoses? Let's get it when it just starts and that's what we're here for."

Initially focused on substance abuse disorders, MVP Recovery began in 2014 with a six-bed recovery house in Chester.



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The S.T.A.R. Program (Stabilization-Triage-Assessment-Referral) can be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 1-855-MVP-2410 (1-855-687-2410).

It has grown to 25 recovery homes in Delaware County with two access centers for intake, evaluation and programming, one in Media and another in Chester. The Chester location at the same 2200 Providence Ave. as the S.T.A.R. Program opened two years ago to help fill the gaps when the largest provider in the county notified officials they would be discontinuing that service.

MVP's programs have statistics that show their success.

Last year, their Warm Hand-off Program that connects those at critical moments of substance abuse with services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, saw 912 individuals of the 1,040 engagements placed into recovery services and get treatment. On June 20 alone, they brought four people from the 69th Street area of Upper Darby to the Chester site in the MVP van and got them all linked up to treatment.

They also saw 140 individuals participate in the Law Enforcement Treatment Initiative, which began in June 2022.

This allows law enforcement officers to reach out to MVP Recovery — again 24 hours a day — when they identify appropriate people who would be best served by treatment rather than incarceration.

Corson was thankful to county officials for a focus on finding answers to challenges such as substance use disorder and mental health.

"A lot of people talk about the problems, but through county council and the Department of Human Services here in Delaware County, our leaders here are really focused on solutions," he said. "And this S.T.A.R. Program is an innovative program that can be a model for every county throughout Pennsylvania, if not the country."