



LOCAL NEWS

MVP's juvenile program explodes with numbers as new drugs surface



Kayla Taylor, the ConnectEd coordinator and Brian Corson, founder of MVP Recovery at MVP's Media offices. (KATHLEEN E. CAREY – DAILY TIMES)

MVP RECOVERY

Juvenile program numbers explode as new drugs emerge

ConnectEd program expects a fivefold increase in youth contacts in 2025.

By Kathleen E. Carey
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Mental health and substance abuse services have skyrocketed more than 450% over a year for one pilot program, as new drugs are also emerging on the scene.

"In 2024, we engaged with 66 adolescents throughout Delaware County linking 67% of them to treatment in real time," said Brian Corson, founder of MVP Recovery, which oversees the ConnectEd program. "In 2025, as of Oct. 17, we have engaged with 246 adolescents throughout Delaware County that have faced a substance use or mental health issue, linking 78% of them to treatment and resources in real time."

Another 36 were added to that by Oct. 29, making the total 282 with an 80% rate of linking them to treatment.

"They've been going up significantly consistently," Kayla Taylor, ConnectEd coordinator, said. "We probably will go over 300."

"The ConnectEd program has helped a family in almost every township, borough and city in Delaware County," Corson said. "This is something that af-



PHOTOS BY KATHLEEN E. CAREY — DAILY TIMES

Kayla Taylor, the ConnectEd coordinator and Brian Corson, founder of MVP Recovery, at MVP's Media offices.

fects our communities here in Delaware County."

Delaware County Council Chair Dr. Monica Taylor praised the program meant to reduce the barriers to help get support for young people in the community.

"Seeing where your numbers have gone from the first year and just how it expanded and the work that you've done to get the word out into community, thank you," she said. "I applaud you for the work that you're doing."

Corson explained that the county did a Healthy Kids, Healthy Schools survey and from that identified what was needed to support

schools. Then, county District Attorney Jack Stollsteimer spearheaded the ConnectEd program to directly link kids to services by creating the program with county council.

'Mental health crisis'

The program serves any youth up to age 18 when they'd be eligible for the regular Warm Hand Off program. Either ConnectEd or the Warm Hand Off program can be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all year long at 855-MVP-2410 (687-2410).

"There is a nationwide mental health crisis, especially when we talk about

our adolescents, and Delaware County is no different than any other community throughout our county right now," he said.

He said 68% of those who contacted ConnectEd was because they have a mental health disorder; 30% had a co-occurring disorder, which is when someone has a mental health and a substance use disorder and 2% reached out to ConnectEd with substance use issues only.

"What this program allows us to do is it also allows us to collect data and outcomes here in Delaware County, where we see drug trends of the individuals that we engage with and what adolescents are using here in Delaware County," Corson said. "The top three substances continue to be alcohol, marijuana and vaping."

He said they've also been getting a lot of calls from schools as vaping is being used at the middle school and even elementary school levels.

"Very young children ... are experimenting with vaping and thinking that it's OK and not knowing what the long-term health effects of an 11-year-old who's vaping right now can be," Corson said, add-



Whether ConnectEd or the Warm Hand Off program or any of its other support programs, MVP Recovery is available 24 hours a day yearlong at 215-MVP-2410 (687-2410).



An MVP Recovery counseling room. Individual counseling can be part of the ConnectEd services.

ing that it's not some safe, new, tech thing.

Taylor added, "These kids don't think that vaping is an issue ... Vaping is one of our No. 1-used substances."

The new cocktail

Corson shared about another drug trend they've seen.

"We had five teenagers

in Delaware County reach out to ConnectEd that were using fentanyl and three of those five were mixing Benadryl with fentanyl, which was a new trend that we hadn't seen prior to (this) and that increases the sedation of the individual that's using and it also increases the overdose rates,"

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he said.

Corson said this mix of Benadryl and fentanyl is really new.

"I think it's so new that there's not even a street name for it yet," he said, noting that they can share this information with stakeholders to tell them what to look out for and how MVP can help.

ConnectEd is also as much about prevention as it is intervention.

"Being able to engage with these individuals when they're kids, when they're teenagers, when they're adolescents and to be able help and support them then so they don't go into adulthood with these issues and experience the negative consequences that are often around mental health and substance use disorders," Corson said.

The teamwork

And, it takes collaboration to do that, he said, from county leaders to the county Department of Human Services and school districts and superinten-

dents.

For Corson, a critical piece of this work is breaking through the stigma that exists that stops people and families from reaching out for help who are struggling with mental health and substance use.

Of the calls they've received, 29% were directly from schools, 31% were from community members and 40% were from partner agencies.

"We've had kids who have just called the number on their own that are looking for help. And we've had a lot of family members that are calling that do not know what to do because they have a loved one who is going through these issues, and they don't know how to help them, or they don't know how to navigate the complicated health care system to get them the necessary help," Corson said.

One way MVP reaches out is through presentations and seminars to schools and community organizations, such as the 25 they've done this year, with one planned Monday at Academy Park High School.

Brian Flatley, MVP's Adolescent Program coordina-

tor, runs groups for schools that focuses on prevention and goes out on the presentations. Corson said Flatley has special appeal with the kids since he also does professional wrestling on the side, where he's known as Brian Murphy.

Corson explained that ConnectEd helps support school counselors, who may have hundreds of students for whom they're responsible and could use MVP's help in navigating the health care resources to get youth the help they need.

Making the call

When someone calls the 855-MVP-2410 (687-2410) number, either Taylor or one of her staff will answer the call, and then triage the call to determine what the family or caller needs and what the concerns of the juvenile are.

They then connect them with accessible services as MVP staff work with their insurance and location for the best outcomes.

In addition, Corson explained that the ConnectEd team can meet that student at the school or the family can bring them to the Media office, whatever is more

comfortable for them. If transportation is an issue, MVP has funding to send them a Lyft and get them to MVP.

When they first started servicing the program, wait times for those on state insurance were six months to a year out, so MVP created their own Adolescent Outpatient program in Media.

"Because we know that when someone reaches out, they need help at that moment, not six months from now," Corson said. "They can get in here and start treatment in 48 hours."

Group therapy, individual counseling and visits with the psychiatrists and nurse practitioners are provided through the ConnectEd program. Certified care specialists, who is successful in living through mental health and substance use disorders, are also available, as is family counseling.

"Real recovery doesn't just happen in treatment," Corson said. "It happens at home."

There's also case management for other needs, such as signing up for sports or finding afterschool activities.