



PRESS RELEASE

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East Providence “Safe Stations” offer safe place for people suffering from substance use disorder

EAST PROVIDENCE, RI – East Bay Community Action Program (EBCAP), in collaboration with the City of East Providence Fire Department, will institute a program called “Safe Stations,” beginning June 30, 2021. Under this new program, all four of the City’s fire stations will become a safe place for people to enter and find help for substance use disorder.

“Providing support to patients with substance abuse disorders is a high priority for the City of East Providence,” said East Providence EMS Director Cpt. John Potvin. “Our fire stations are located within the community and symbolize a beacon of help for our residents regardless of their illness or injury.”

“One of our Safe Stations may very well be a life line for someone battling addiction to get the treatment, support and services they so desperately need,” Mayor Bob DaSilva said. “We are proud to partner with EBCAP to provide people a first step to treatment and recovery.”

The program encourages people seeking help with substance use disorders to go to any East Providence Fire Station at any time, 24 hours a day/seven days a week. The program also offers support to families or friends that have a loved one who is struggling with substance use. The Fire Department personnel will contact the on-call Recovery Center staff and, within an hour of the call, a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist will arrive at the station to talk with the individual and provide supports according to the person’s wishes.

“The Peer Recovery Specialists, who will assist at the Safe Stations are able to immediately schedule appointments for our Suboxone Clinic (Medication Assisted Therapy), connect individuals to the agency’s treatment programs, and/ or engage them in our East Bay Recovery Center, if the individual so chooses,” EBCAP’s Vice President of Behavioral Health component said.

“If they want to receive medication assisted treatment, we can arrange for an intake with induction of medication to happen within 24 hours at the EBCAP Suboxone Program,” EBCAP East Bay Recovery Center Dir. Thomas Joyce said. “If they want to engage in treatment or they want to become involved in the Recovery Center, we’ll arrange that too.

“If they aren’t ready for any of that, we’ll listen and offer to stay connected so we can support them should they change their mind or need additional assistance in the future,” Joyce added.

The rise in accidental fatal overdoses in Rhode Island accentuates the need for such interventions. After seeing a decrease by 8.3 percent from 2016 to 2019, accidental drug overdose deaths increased by 25 percent, from 308 in 2019 to 384 in 2020, according to the Office of the State Medical Examiners (OSME), Rhode Island Dept. of Health.

Accidental overdoses have likely been spurred by a perfect storm of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the isolation people are experiencing, along with an influx in the region of counterfeit medications that are laced with Fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid analgesic that is 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine, according to Joyce. There is also an increase of Fentanyl being introduced into the state’s cocaine supply, which is another factor in the rise in fatalities.

The Safe Stations program is also beneficial in diverting patients from local hospitals’ emergency departments. In fact, the Safe Station model is also an emergency room diversion concept that allows access to support and services outside of a hospital setting. Emergency room diversion programs are a cost-effective way to get individuals specialized services without the high cost of an emergency room visit.

For more information on the Safe Stations program, call Tommy Joyce at 401-302-6231.

East Bay Community Action Program is a private, non-profit 501 (c) (3) corporation that provides a wide array of health and human services to the residents of Rhode Island’s East Bay, including the municipalities of East Providence, Barrington, Warren, Bristol, Little Compton, Tiverton, Portsmouth, Middletown, Newport, and Jamestown. For more information regarding services and to learn how you too can support the CAP which supports the East Bay community, please visit www.ebcap.org.

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