ON THE FRONT LINES FOR TREATMENT OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

Substance use disorder (SUD) affects people from all walks of life, and Pittsburgh Mercy offers a number of programs aimed at meeting people where they are in their addiction or recovery process.

The pandemic has shed new light on this important area due to alarming increases in drug overdose deaths. Provisional data from CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics estimated 100,306 drug overdose deaths from April 2020 to April 2021, a jump of 28.5%.

It's Often Not Just SUD

SUD affects a number of persons served by Pittsburgh Mercy’s programs, and it’s often coupled with other needs or disorders. We are proud to offer comprehensive programs that take into account each individual's overall situation and address all of their needs.

Those with dual disorders of mental health and SUD are served by Pittsburgh Mercy’s Outpatient, Intensive Outpatient, and Partial Hospitalization programs, which are licensed through the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP). In addition, our Integrated Dual Disorders Team (IDDT), a specialized Community Treatment Team which focuses on the needs of persons with SUD, provides treatment and support services.

Those experiencing homelessness and SUD can receive comprehensive help through street outreach and Winter Shelter teams from Pittsburgh Mercy’s Operation Safety Net.

Those with SUD who have had encounters with the justice system can receive help from our Intervention Services, a designated service provider for Allegheny County’s Treatment Courts. Available support includes assessments, education, Alcohol Highway Safety School, intervention, and treatment referrals for individuals who have been arrested for driving under the influence (DUI), underage drinking, or related offenses.

“It is important that we treat all of our persons served with dignity and respect,” said Melissa Nossal, vice president, Behavioral Health Services at Pittsburgh Mercy. “There is often a lot of stigma, judgment, and frustration related to individuals struggling with substance use. Substance use disorder is a disease that changes the biology and neurological pathways of the brain. Often a person cannot just stop. Treatment is key.”

Walk-ins Welcome for Outpatient SUD Treatment

Some with SUD seek help on their own (versus coming to us through the County or Treatment Courts). We welcome them at Pittsburgh Mercy’s Admission Center, no referral required. The outpatient programs at East Commons Center (North Side) and South 9th Street (South Side) are licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol
Programs (DDAP) to offer treatment for people with co-occurring SUD and mental health disorders.

Following the walk-in assessment, individuals may take part in one of several programs:

The **Outpatient Partial Hospitalization Program (PHP)** at East Commons Center provides five-days-a-week sessions that include doctor and psychiatrist visits. Treatment can be held virtually or in-person, although Philicia Barbieri, SUD Team practice administrator, says in-person is strongly encouraged.

The **Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)** at both East Commons Center and South 9th Street involves three days per week, virtually and/or in-person groups, designed for those in the early stages of recovery who need increased support to maintain sobriety. An evening IOP program, currently held virtually, is available for those who work during the day.

The **Outpatient SUD treatment programs** at both locations include individual, family, and group therapies; supportive counseling; medication for addiction treatment and medication management services, along with care management. Some groups are for those new to recovery while others focus on harm reduction, relapse prevention, and motivational and recovery programs. Together, these programs currently serve around 200 persons per year, with capacity to increase to over 500 persons.

To learn more, visit [OverdoseFreePA](http://OverdoseFreePA). For more information about Pittsburgh Mercy’s services, visit [www.pittsburghmercy.org](http://www.pittsburghmercy.org).

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**Take Action to Help Support Community Health Programs**

**Help advance key legislation by contacting your representatives today!**

Caregivers and all who have kept our programs open and running 24/7 throughout the pandemic are tired and burned-out. Continuing to meet public health emergency staffing needs is proving to be a challenge like no other the entire health care industry has faced.

We have also seen firsthand how social determinants impact the health and well-being of the vulnerable people and communities we serve, and how those factors continue to be exacerbated by the pandemic.

**You can make a difference.** We urge you to contact your representatives in Congress and ask them to support the **Social Determinants Accelerator Act (HR 2503)**, a bipartisan bill that seeks to address unmet health and social needs by retaining current caregivers while investing in a more diverse workforce for tomorrow. Click [here](http://here) if you need to find your representatives and/or their contact information.