



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: Taylor Cepeda
Medical Society of Virginia
804-377-1042
tcepeda@msv.org

Lauren Cunningham
Dept. of Behavioral Health &
Developmental Services
lauren.cunningham@dbhds.virginia.gov

DBHDS, MSV Launch Program to Help Physicians Better Assist Adults Dealing with Substance Use Disorders

RICHMOND, Va., October 31, 2024 – The Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) and Medical Society of Virginia (MSV) are launching a resource aimed to help adults struggling with substance use disorders (SUDs).

The Adult Psychiatric Access Line (APAL), a program of HealthHaven, is a statewide care navigation and consultation program that provides adults affected by SUDs access to specialized behavioral health services. The initiative equips healthcare providers – specifically primary care and emergency clinicians – with tools and consultation to diagnose, prescribe and assist patients seeking care.

“For over 10 years, the leading cause of unnatural death in Virginia has been drug overdoses, and this trend is even worse by the dangers of opioids and fentanyl,” **DBHDS Commissioner Nelson Smith** said. “We want to make sure healthcare providers know how to effectively help a patient struggling with substance use disorders. APAL builds on the big successes of the Virginia Mental Health Access Program (VMAP) for children and will ensure that primary care providers have the resources they need to help their patients recover from substance use disorders.”

APAL features three main components.

- Provider education on screening, diagnosis and management of SUDs
- Access to phone consultations via regional hubs with access to professional support from addiction medicine specialists, psychiatrists, psychologists and/or social workers
- Care navigation assistance to identify regional care and services

Primary care providers (PCP) calling HealthHaven’s APAL program will be directed to a regional hub operator to provide intake information to a Licensed Psychological Practitioner (LPP) or care navigation team member. Within 30 minutes, an addiction medicine consult team will contact the PCP for support, and if needed, the PCP then will be connected to a care navigation team to work directly with the patient to assess next steps based on the region and services available.

“Substance use in Virginia mirrors what we’re seeing nationally: The problem isn’t going away,” said **Melina Davis, CEO and EVP of the Medical Society of Virginia**. “VMAP is helping to better equip our primary care providers seeing pediatric patients with tangible ways to make a difference. With all of Virginia’s localities designated as mental health professional shortage areas, APAL will bridge the access gap across the state for PCPs seeing adults with substance use disorder.”

Both APAL and VMAP are important efforts in Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin’s *Right Help, Right Now* initiative to reform Virginia’s behavioral health system, support individuals in crisis and support Virginians before, during and after a behavioral health crisis occurs.

* * *

Adult Psychiatric Access Line (APAL), a Program of HealthHaven

APAL is a statewide consult and care navigation program designed for adults struggling with substance use disorders to access specialized behavioral health services and prepare primary care and emergency clinicians to support patients’ behavioral health needs through trainings and education.

Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) seeks to promote dignity, choice, recovery and the highest possible level of participation in work, relationships and all aspects of community life for individuals with mental illness, developmental disabilities or substance-use disorders. DBHDS operates 12 state facilities and partners with 40 locally-run community services boards and hundreds of private providers statewide. For more information, please visit www.dbhds.virginia.gov, and find DBHDS on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) or [YouTube](#).

Medical Society of Virginia

The Medical Society of Virginia strives to advance high-quality care and make Virginia the best place to practice medicine and receive care. We provide relevant insurance coverage options and benefits, and the administrative, membership, and legislative services to the over 30,000 physicians and PAs in the Commonwealth so they can focus on what they love, caring for patients.

###