



Healthy Acadia

Building vibrant communities in Hancock and Washington counties

CORRECTED: For Immediate Release Please

Date: May 3, 2019

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Healthy Acadia and Partners Launch Education Program for Clinicians Seeking to Expand Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder

Healthy Acadia, in partnership with Maine Quality Counts, a Maine-based organization focused on improving systems of health care, and a network of providers and public health advocates across Washington and Hancock counties, is launching a year-long educational initiative to increase provider skills and confidence in the area of medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorders.

The Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes initiative, or ECHO, will target healthcare providers in primary care settings who seek to learn more about MAT. ECHO is modeled on Project ECHO, an evidence-based educational model developed by researchers at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center. The model uses videoconferencing to connect interdisciplinary specialist teams with primary-care clinicians to build knowledge, confidence and skills to treat complex conditions through case-based learning, mentoring, guidance, treatment recommendations, and didactic education. Participants can join ECHO sessions from any location with internet access and a computer with a webcam and microphone.

ECHO will enable clinical teams to present complex, real-life cases involving opioid use disorders (OUD), and receive feedback from experienced faculty from across the state regarding recommendations with how to proceed. The whole group learns together, and forms lasting networks and mentoring relationships. Funding support from a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant allows ECHO to be offered at no cost to clinicians.

“In order to address the opioid crisis in our region, we need more primary care providers to add MAT care to their menu of services,” says Michael Murnik, a VP Senior Physician Executive, at Northern Light Blue Hill Hospital who has been actively involved in planning the initiative. “We want to connect providers with support, education, and a team of experienced colleagues to help make it easier for them to provide MAT.”

The scope and focus of this initiative have been shaped by a committee comprising representatives from health care facilities from Washington and Hancock Counties. “This program has been customized to meet the needs of Downeast medical providers,” said Holly Gartmeyer-DeYoung, CEO of Eastport Health Care. “We’re offering two different ECHO programs over the coming year to address the very specific goal of increasing access to MAT across the region. Increasing the number of providers offering this treatment is a strategy we know will make a difference for people seeking recovery.”



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The program will include two educational components. The first, Readiness Academy, will offer monthly sessions in June, July, and August, and will focus on operational and administrative considerations, and organizational culture. The second ECHO session will take place monthly from October 2019 through May 2020 and will focus on all the specifics of providing MAT, including the basics of addiction, urine drug screening, pain management, behavioral health, and other topics.

“People in our community are dying and providers can be part of the solution,” said Dr. Julian Kuffler of Mount Desert Island Hospital.

To learn more about ECHO in Hancock and Washington counties, please contact Penny Guisinger at Healthy Acadia: (207) 255-3741 or Penny@HealthyAcadia.org.

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