

Staten Island hospital opens opioid treatment center for teens, young adults

Richmond University Medical Center in Staten Island has opened a medication-assisted treatment center for people ages 16 to 24 who are struggling with opioid-use disorder.

The center, funded by a Statewide Health Care Facility Transformation Program grant, is in the Center for Integrative Behavioral Medicine, also known as the Silberstein Clinic, at 1130 South Ave.

The opening comes about a year after the Staten Island Mental Health Society became a division of the medical center [in a merger](#).

A substance-use program has existed for adolescents ages 11 and older and their families, said Dr. Joel Idowu, chairman of psychiatry and behavioral health sciences at the medical center. However, he said, older people with opioid-use disorder also can benefit from medication-assisted treatment.

The treatment "offers something that frees you to be able to go to work and live your life like any other person," Idowu said. "The medication is effective and helps people to stay sober, and it reduces the risk of overdose."

An injectable form of one such medication, buprenorphine, is available through the new program, he said, adding that it comes in convenient monthly doses.

For most patients, insurance covers the treatment.

The medical center noted in a filing with the state that opioid misuse, including heroin misuse, among adolescents and young adults has "risen dramatically in the past two decades." However, it said, treatment capacity for the population remains "extremely low," and Staten Island has the highest incidence of opioid use and related deaths in the city.

The new program is aimed at addressing those gaps in care and aligning with the state's Medicaid reform priority of integrating medication-assisted treatment into primary-care settings.