

\$630,000 awarded to support Massachusetts teens in recovery from substance use

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) today announced \$630,000 in grants to support Alternative Peer Group model programs for young people ages 13-17 who are in active recovery from opioid use, stimulant use, or other substances, or who have been identified as being at risk for such use.

Duffy Health Center in Barnstable and Railroad Street Youth Project in Great Barrington will be awarded the grants over the next year and a half to operate programs that will serve at least 30 individuals annually. The Alternative Peer Group model incorporates age appropriate and enjoyable social activities into support services to ensure that adolescents stay engaged in long-term recovery as needed.

“Substance use among adolescents can have alarming long-term impacts on their health and well-being so it is imperative that those in recovery are exposed to positive peer influence as well as support services,” said Health and Human Services Secretary Marylou Sudders. “This award also ensures the continuity of these important services during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The model program encourages recovering teens to learn how to have as much fun as possible within healthy boundaries, rewards them for healthy choices, honesty, and integrity, and strongly encourages parents/guardians to attend their own recovery meetings and create their own program of accountability to support their teen.

“We need to work harder to support adolescents with their substance use disorder treatment and recovery,” said Public

Health Commissioner Monica Bharel, MD, MPH. “These funds will offer a comprehensive model that combines positive social activities with evidence-based supports to keep teenagers with opioid and substance use disorder engaged in their recovery.”

“DPH and the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services are continuing to innovate in order to better protect and support Massachusetts youth,” said Deirdre Calvert, Director of DPH’s Bureau of Substance Addiction Services. “We must build support for young people in recovery and those at risk for substance use and show them the enjoyment and fulfillment that can come from maintaining their sobriety and supporting their peers.”

Each organization will receive \$52,500 in FY21, \$210,000 in FY22, and \$52,500 in FY23. The program is funded through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) State Opioid Response (SOR) grant.