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## **Wolf Administration Visits Valley Health Partners Community Health Center, Highlights Expansion of Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder in Rural Pennsylvania**

**Harrisburg, PA –** The Wolf Administration visited Lehigh Valley Health Network's Valley Health Partners Community Health Center (VHP) to discuss their participation in the administration's expansion of the Rural Access to Medication-Assisted Treatment in Pennsylvania project (Project RAMP). Project RAMP expands access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder (OUD) across primary care providers in rural Pennsylvania.

"The expansion of medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder into primary care practices will help combat stigma by treating the disease of addiction just like any other chronic disease such as heart disease or diabetes," said Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) Secretary Jen Smith. "The success of Project RAMP shows that we have a golden opportunity to increase access to life-saving resources, especially in rural parts of Pennsylvania, and ultimately save more lives. I applaud the tremendous work done by Lehigh Valley Health Network and the University of Pittsburgh and hope that this project will serve as a model to further increase access to substance use disorder treatment across the commonwealth."

Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN), VHP, and University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health and the Program Evaluation and Research Unit (Pitt PERU) implemented Project RAMP to incorporate universal screening for substance use disorders in outpatient clinics and medications for OUD in primary care practices.

"This collaboration between Lehigh Valley Health Network, Valley Health Partners, the University of Pittsburgh, and their other partners has built a robust continuum of care that can help people not only as they seek to recover from their substance use disorder, but through other health and personal challenges they may face," said Department of Human Services Acting Secretary Meg Snead. "Because of this work, people who may have previously faced discrimination or challenges navigating the health care system

have the advocates and support they deserve as they seek to improve their health and overall wellbeing.”

Beginning in 2018, LVHN set up emergency department, inpatient, and primary care-based resources to support patients with OUD and to provide MAT. After implementing initial acute care treatment, the team began to train primary care physicians to continue care in outpatient settings. The initiative began with just four primary care physicians and as of spring 2021 had 25 participating primary care providers in urban, suburban, and rural Pennsylvania.

“Valley Health Partners has been intentional in creating a space for whole-person primary care, inclusive of patients with substance use disorder,” said Dr. Mary Stock Keister. “Building on the work of Project RAMP and PacMAT, VHP has supported the training of Family Medicine clinicians to provide medication assisted treatment, while offering patients a welcoming medical home with connections to behavioral and social support to better manage their disease and improve their functioning in the community. Since inception, VHP has provided MAT services to 184 patients, some of whom have been maintaining recovery for more than 18 months.”

Project RAMP was funded through \$79 million in Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) State Opioid Response II funding received by DDAP.

Individuals seeking substance use disorder treatment or recovery resources for themselves or a loved one can call the toll-free PA Get Help Now helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357). This helpline is confidential, available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and staffed by trained professionals with interpretation services available in more than 200 languages. Callers can also be connected with funding if they need help paying for treatment. A [live chat option](#) is also available online or via text message at 717-216-0905 for those seeking help who may not be comfortable speaking to a helpline operator.

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