



**For Immediate Release**  
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**MAHP, PAARI & the Gloucester Police Department Partner to Address the Opioid Crisis**  
*Launch Pilot Program to Help Coordinate Care for Individuals Suffering from Opioid Addiction*

**Boston, MA** – Seeking to combat the opioid crisis, the Massachusetts Association of Health Plans (MAHP) and the Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative (PAARI) today announced that they will launch a pilot program on January 4, 2016 to support individuals struggling with opioid addiction. MAHP member health plans will work closely with the Gloucester Police Department to utilize health plan clinical support staff, currently available on a 24/7 basis, to help ensure that individuals in need of substance use services transition to the right level of care after they have presented to the Gloucester police station.

"Detox is not the end of treatment, but for many people is the first step towards recovery. Our members recognize the importance of having supports in place for individuals as they move along the continuum of care, so that all residents of the Commonwealth who need treatment are able to get appropriate care in the right setting," said Lora Pellegrini, MAHP President & CEO. "The work being done by PAARI takes an innovative approach to treating rather than incarcerating those with opioid addiction and the actions of PAARI will work to remove the stigma associated with this epidemic."

"Rather than try to arrest our way out of the problem of drug addiction, our focus has been to bridge the gap between the police department and people suffering from the disease of opioid addiction seeking recovery so that individuals struggling with addiction can get the medical care they need," said Leonard Campanello, Chief of the Gloucester Police Department and Co-Founder of PAARI. "We appreciate the commitment that MAHP and its member health plans have made to work with us to ensure that individuals get to the appropriate level of care as they work towards recovery."

"When we launched PAARI, just six months ago, the goal was to create a new and innovative approach led by law enforcement, to remove the stigma and barriers and help provide the resources to create a continuum of care for those struggling with the disease of opioid addiction," said John Rosenthal, Stop Handgun Violence founder and Co-Founder of PAARI. "We are thrilled to be working with MAHP and its member health plans as this offers an opportunity to strengthen the work we have begun and engage others in the health care system to help us break the cycle of addiction and provide long term care for this disease like any other chronic illness."

The PAARI program was started to support local police departments as they work with opioid addicts. To address the problem of drug addiction, police departments involved with the program encourage opioid drug users to seek recovery, help distribute life-saving opioid blocking drugs to prevent and treat overdoses, and connect individuals struggling with addiction with treatment programs and facilities. Since launching the program in June of this year, it has had tremendous success in helping more than 360 individuals obtain detox services and other treatment. However, detox is only the first step and, like any other chronic disease, opioid addiction often requires long-term treatment and support. In addition, more than 44 police departments in 9 states and 57 treatment centers in 19 states have partnered with PAARI.

The pilot program between MAHP and PAARI is aimed at building upon the current efforts by ensuring that clinical supports are in place as individuals transition through the different levels of care. The pilot includes three important components:

- Care coordination and discharge planning to ensure that a comprehensive treatment plan is in place for individuals following detox to avoid relapse;

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- Education and outreach to individuals so that they are aware of the full range of substance abuse treatment options available to them; and
- Data collection to track patients at each level of care and assess the impact of the program, comparing the innovative intervention developed by PAARI, where those with opioid addiction seek out treatment as opposed to other methods utilized to access treatment.

In addition to already making clinical support staff available on a 24/7 basis, health plans provide coverage for a broad range of services to treat opioid addiction. Treatment includes emergency inpatient treatment and clinical stabilization services, outpatient treatment including counseling and behavioral therapies, and coverage for medication assisted treatment, such as Methadone, Suboxone and Vivitrol.

In response to the pilot program, several state officials and local health care leaders applauded MAHP and PAARI on their efforts to address the opioid crisis.

"Addiction treatment needs to be available in the right place, at the right time, and in the right mode to be successful, and it won't happen at all unless people can get into it in the first place," said Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester). "By giving a way to get treatment through the police department, and timely access to the right type of care, this pilot program holds enormous potential to save lives, prevent recidivist addiction, control costs, and make a real difference for those suffering from addiction, their families, and our communities."

"Given the historic epidemic of opiate abuse we are experiencing PAARI has pioneered an entire new avenue for addicts to access treatment on a timely basis. The partnership with MAHP is another progressive step towards assisting individuals to begin the road to recovery, save lives and establish a model other communities can follow," said Charles Faris, President & CEO, Spectrum Health Systems.

"These are exactly the type of creative collaborations and conversations that are needed to end the opioid crisis. Ensuring treatment is available and covered throughout the continuum of care will ensure individuals get the help and support they need to be successful through their recovery," said Senator Jennifer Flanagan (D-Leominster), Senate chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse.

"I am pleased to see the recognition and support the Massachusetts Association of Health Plans has given the Gloucester 'Angel' program," said Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante (D-Gloucester), House Chair of the Joint Committee on Community Development and Small Businesses. "I commend the City of Gloucester, especially Chief Campenello, for its ongoing efforts and commitment to influence drug policy and to deal with the opioid epidemic head on. I look forward to continuing to work with all parties moving forward."

"This partnership is a promising model and a logical next step," said Representative Liz Malia (D-Jamaica Plain), House Chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health and Substance Abuse. "A collaboration like this is the type of encouraging, creative response we need to combat the Commonwealth's opioid public health crisis."

"The combination of treatment, education and care coordination are essential to helping individuals dealing with addiction get better and we applaud the work of MAHP, PAARI and the Gloucester Police Department to bring these services together," said David Matteodo, executive director of the Massachusetts Association of Behavioral Health Systems.

#### **About MAHP**

*The Massachusetts Association of Health Plans represents 17 health plans covering more than 2.6 million Massachusetts residents. It is dedicated to improving health for all in Massachusetts by promoting affordable, safe and coordinated health care.*

#### **About PAARI**

*The Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to support the Gloucester Police addiction initiatives, to aid other police departments to implement similar programs, and to foster a dialogue around the unique opportunity for police departments to take direct action against the disease of drug addiction in their communities.*