



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

KEVIN R. STEELE

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

EDWARD F. McCANN, JR.

FIRST ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY

COURTHOUSE

P.O. BOX 311

NORRISTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

19404-0311

MARK A. BERNSTIEL

CHIEF COUNTY DETECTIVE

JESSE S. KING

CHIEF OF STAFF

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S FAX

COUNTY DETECTIVE BUREAU

(610) 278-3090

(610) 278-3095

(610) 278-3368

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

POLICE IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY READY TO HELP INDIVIDUALS SUFFERING WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE THROUGH NEW PROGRAM LAUNCHED WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (June 3, 2021) —Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro, Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele, Montgomery County Police Chiefs Association President J. Scott Bendig and Montgomery County Office of Drug & Alcohol Administrator Linda Moore-Singleton announced today the launching of the Law Enforcement Treatment Initiative (LETI), which allows Montgomery County residents suffering from substance abuse disorder to get help by going to their local police department.

Those seeking addiction treatment can get help in two ways: they can present themselves at a police department and ask for help, or they can be informed about the program's availability and be referred to it by law enforcement as a diversion from arrest/prosecution. Montgomery County residents in need of drug and alcohol treatment are eligible for the LETI program if they face arrest for simple possession of a controlled substance or drug paraphernalia, misdemeanor theft, criminal mischief, criminal trespass, disorderly conduct, fake ID and other related misdemeanor charges.

Attorney General Shapiro discussed the importance of these LETI programs across the state, an initiative his office began in 2018. "As we continue to combat the opioid epidemic in Pennsylvania, giving individuals access to the treatment they need will save lives and make our communities safer," said Attorney General Shapiro. "Montgomery County's commitment to the LETI program offers crucial support to Pennsylvanians suffering from substance use disorders, and I commend District Attorney Kevin Steele for his willingness to tackle this crisis across the board."

How it works: If someone presents themselves to police or if the person facing arrest is eligible, police will facilitate immediate entry into treatment through referral to Gaudenzia, the Montgomery County Office of Drug & Alcohol provider that will provide treatment for this program. An intake interview by Gaudenzia staff will be immediately conducted, and the person entering treatment will then be provided transportation by police to the treatment facility or the individual may take private or treatment provider transportation.

The primary goal of the program is to reduce deaths, overdoses and crime associated with the substance use disorders (SUD) by getting people into appropriate treatment. The program will also further strengthen police-community relationships by encouraging those suffering from addiction to reach out to police for help; connect those with SUD to organizations able to help; and reduce the stigma of SUD.

“Drug overdose deaths claim more than 250 lives each year in Montgomery County. We have worked tirelessly with our law enforcement community to stem the tide of suffering that comes with drug addiction through every means possible, from Drug Treatment Court to collecting unwanted medications to holding drug traffickers accountable for their actions of selling this poison to our residents,” said DA Steele. “This is another avenue to help those suffering from substance abuse disorder—and help their families—by working to get them the treatment they need. Immediate referrals to treatment will save lives and, in some cases, save the addicted individual from a criminal record.”

Montgomery Township Police Chief J. Scott Bendig, representing all of the Montgomery County Police Chiefs, talked about the game-changing aspect of LETI in people’s lives.

“Police across Montgomery County are proud to be able to help those suffering from addiction to drug and alcohol, and just as importantly, save them from facing criminal charges that ultimately stem from their addiction,” said Chief Bendig. “Successfully getting and completing treatment will change their lives forever and may even save lives.”

Individuals are not eligible for the LETI program if they are facing drug trafficking charges (PWID), have an outstanding warrant, are carrying a firearm without a license or are aggressive/threatening and cannot be verbally deescalated.

Montgomery County is the tenth county to structure and launch a Law Enforcement Treatment Initiative program, which provides resources to Pennsylvanians across the Commonwealth. Other counties where a LETI currently operates are Berks, Bradford, Carbon, Dauphin, Delaware, Northumberland, Schuylkillx and Somerset counties. On the state level, the full-time coordinator for the PA Law Enforcement Treatment Initiative is Janene Holter, PhD, an agent with the Office of Attorney General. In Montgomery County, the program will be overseen by Assistant District Attorney Cara McMenamin, captain of the Treatment Courts.

District Attorneys in Pennsylvania interested in starting a Law Enforcement Treatment Initiative program should contact the Office of the Attorney General at 570-826-2483.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele