



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 10, 2020

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**Bay Rivers Telehealth Alliance Wins \$1,000,000 in Federal Funds
For the Community Bridges Collaborative**
to Support Rural Communities Opioid Response and Implement Services

Tappahannock, Virginia: Bay Rivers Telehealth Alliance (BRTA) has been awarded federal grant funds of \$1,000,000 over 3 years to strengthen and expand substance use disorder (SUD), including opioid use disorder (OUD) prevention, treatment, and recovery services in underserved rural areas. The goals for the grant build on the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP), a multi-year federal initiative to address barriers to access in services in rural communities. BRTA took the first step in 2018-2019 through a RCORP planning grant to identify community barriers and develop strategies to address related SUD/OUD community needs. Funds from the newly awarded Rural Communities Opioid Response Program Implementation (RCORP-I) grant will carry out strategies identified in the earlier strategic plan through 2023.

The primary focus of the Community Bridges Collaborative is to reduce morbidity and mortality associated with substance use disorder (SUD) and opioid use disorder (OUD) by 1) expanding the capabilities of the behavioral health services infrastructure, 2) instituting and enhancing evidence-based and evidence-informed practices, and 3) providing workforce development opportunities and telehealth-enabled innovations to increase access to services in the rural target service area.

The initial projects for this Collaborative are to increase access to training for the use of naloxone (a medicine to reverse opioid overdose); year-round drug take back programs in pharmacies and doctor's offices; offer screening and referral to treatment for patients with SUD/OUD; and coordinate a hub and spoke model of telehealth enabled access to OUD treatment through interdisciplinary teams of medical, clinical, and social service providers providing medication-assisted treatment (MAT). The Collaborative is eager to work with community partners to continue enhancing and developing seamless coordination of services.

The federal funding comes from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health, HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy which exists to increase access to healthcare in rural areas.

The Collaborative includes regional organizations that form the consortium partnership including: BRTA, Bay Aging, Ledwith Lewis Free Clinic, Middle Peninsula Northern Neck Community Services Board, Riverside Health System, and Three Rivers Health Department and Rappahannock Community College. BRTA's executive director, Donna Dittman Hale, said "*we are excited to continue to work with our partners, and reach out to other key stakeholders to enhance efforts to address this ongoing epidemic in our rural communities.*"

Bay Rivers Telehealth Alliance (BRTA) is a telehealth consortium based in Tappahannock, VA whose member organizations strive to serve communities in Eastern Virginia by supporting virtual health projects that improve health and health care.

For more information, call: (757) 532-1196