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Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority Allocates \$2.2 Million to Establish New Substance Use Treatment Program in Central Virginia

Bedford, VA – For 25 years, International Overdose Awareness Day has brought people and communities together to remember those we've lost and to take action to save lives. According to the most recent data from the Virginia Department of Health, 1,167 Virginians lost their lives to confirmed opioid overdose in 2024, a 43% decrease from the previous year ([VDH, 2024](#)).

This International Overdose Awareness Day, Bedford County and Horizon Behavioral Health aim to build on this momentum by sharing the forthcoming launch of the Blue Ridge Regional Jail Authority Recovery and Reentry Program supported by a five-year regional \$2.2 Million cooperative grant from the Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority (VOAA).

"With fiscal support from the VOAA, this new program will be the bridge to a hopeful future for hundreds of individuals who, too often, have nowhere or no one to turn to as they try to begin life anew. Horizon is proud to join arms with allied partners to establish strong safeguards and treatment supports that have the power to change lives here in Central Virginia," said Melissa Lucy, Chief Executive Officer at Horizon Behavioral Health.

This collaborative initiative will involve the counties of Bedford, Amherst, Appomattox, Campbell, Lynchburg City, Blue Ridge Regional Jail Authority, and Horizon Behavioral Health. Over the five-year duration of the grant, the program will invest approximately \$2.2 Million in expanding evidence-based substance use disorder treatment, medication-assisted treatment, peer recovery support, and coordinated reentry services for justice-involved individuals across the region. The project is designed to serve approximately 80 individuals annually and strengthen continuity of care between the jail and community behavioral health services.

"Communities across Central Virginia continue to face substance use challenges, and no single locality can address those alone. By working together, we can expand access to treatment, recovery support, and services that help people successfully return to their communities," said Bedford County Administrator, Robert Hiss. "Bedford County is proud to join our neighboring localities and regional partners to make a lasting difference across our region."

"Individuals cycle in and out of our facilities because the support they need on the outside can be hard to acquire. This program lets us change that," said Keith Lockridge, Administrator, Blue Ridge Regional Jail Authority. "By connecting people to treatment and recovery support before they walk out our doors, we are not just reducing recidivism, we are giving people a real chance to rebuild their lives. None of this would be possible without the support of our member jurisdictions, whose commitment made it possible for the Authority to be part of this program. We are grateful to Horizon Behavioral Health, Bedford County, and the regional partners for making this possible."

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Horizon Behavioral Health has been the primary public behavioral healthcare provider in Central Virginia for more than 58 years. In the last year, Horizon provided services to over 12,000 adults and children, supporting individuals with mental illness, substance use disorder and intellectual disabilities. Horizon is accredited by CARF International. This represents the highest level of accreditation that can be given to a behavioral health organization. To learn more about Horizon, please visit HorizonBH.org.