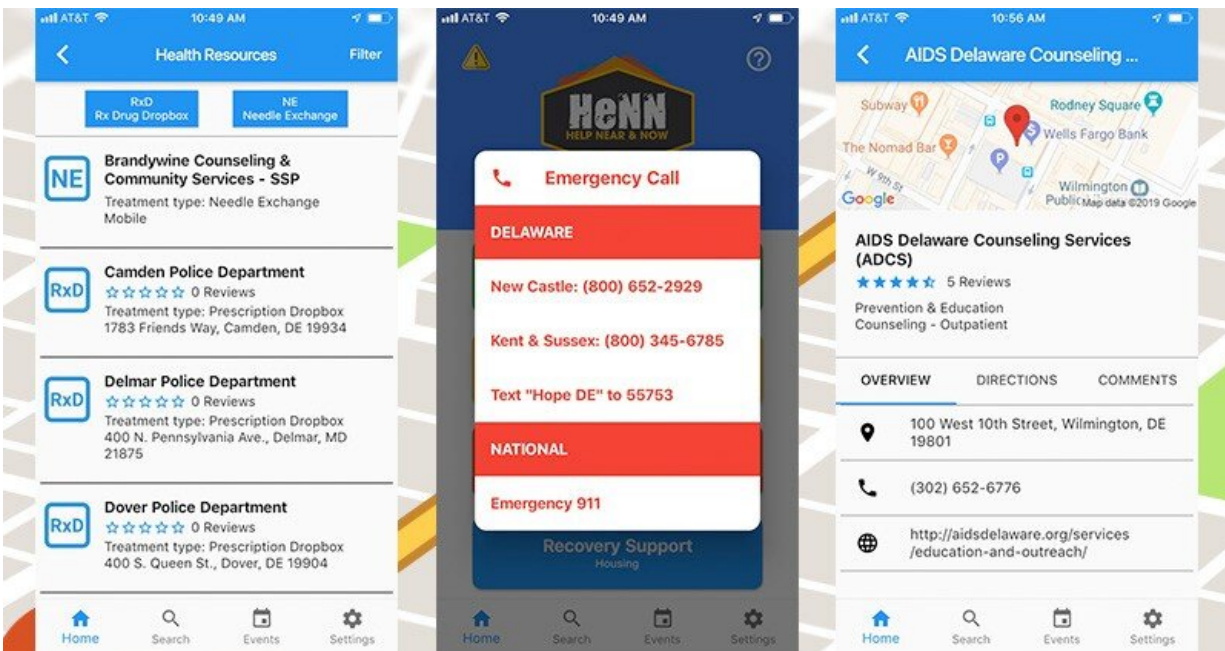


New app designed for opioid users, loved ones, providers

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The app, Help Near and Now (or HeNN), was developed by a multidisciplinary team at the University of Delaware, along with industry partners Greenline Business Group and CompassRed. Credit: University of Delaware

A new smartphone app puts a network of information and support about opioid and other substance use disorders into the hands of users, their loved ones and health care providers.

The app, Help Near and Now (or HeNN), was developed by a

multidisciplinary team at the University of Delaware, along with industry partners Greenline Business Group and CompassRed.

It offers novel features designed to address Delaware's opioid crisis. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the state was ranked in the top 10 in the nation for highest 2018 overdose rates, with 400 fatal overdoses.

"Like many other states across the country, overdose deaths in Delaware continue to escalate and are expanding to other types of opioids and other drugs, both legal and illegal in origin," said Tammy L. Anderson, leader of the team that developed HeNN.

A professor of sociology and criminal justice and associate director of the University's Center for Drug and Health Studies, Anderson has been studying drugs and crime since the crack cocaine epidemic of the 1980s. She said HeNN provides a location-based, interactive platform to connect those with opioid and other [substance use disorders](#) and their families to resources and services.

The app is free, is available for download on all Android and Apple devices and offers immediate help, including information about where services are located and the best ways to reach them.

"The uniqueness of the HeNN app lies in providing users with a one-stop source of high-quality information related to substance use and abuse," said fellow team leader Hui Fang. "HeNN can efficiently connect users with the services that they need and can trust, and it aims to provide more customized proactive information support in the future."

Anderson noted that, because HeNN's development features partnerships with many public and private agencies, stakeholders and care providers, it offers access to a broad range of services. For example, a doctor

looking for [addiction treatment](#) for a patient could use HeNN to learn about all such services in the state, not just those affiliated with the hospital where he or she works.

In addition to the wide access, another important feature is that the app creates a peer network where people can rate and comment on services.

"Just like a customer buying a TV on Amazon can see what other customers say about it, those seeking treatment services can hear from their peers on this app," Anderson said. Health care providers can also use the feedback, she said, to help patients find the kinds of services most appropriate to their individual situation.

Cathy Wu, also a HeNN team leader, said work will continue on ways to further enhance the app.

"We will conduct data analytics to improve utilization and user experience of the HeNN app, to increase community engagement and network building and to identify gaps in services to inform care and treatment providers and policy-makers," Wu said.

Gabriel Humphreys, director of technology and operations at Green Line Business Group, said the company was enthusiastic about the project from the start.

"On hearing HeNN's mission and proposed goals, we knew immediately they aligned with Green Line's values," he said. "So we decided to contribute our expertise in crafting location-based mobile apps in order to provide the help HeNN's users need."

The app lists available resources, using location-based services to map where each is located, and provides driving directions and information on available public transportation to the nearest services. It also includes

an "events" section that can be continually updated with information about support group meetings, adolescent counseling sessions or similar one-time or recurring services.

Anderson said that HeNN offers help in four distinct categories of services and events:

- **Prevention.** Before someone develops a substance use disorder, the app can help individuals and families find information about risk factors and preventive actions.
- **Treatment.** Its directory of providers and agencies gives detailed information about the types of services offered and their location.
- **Post-treatment.** The app also provides a listing of support resources for those who have completed treatment and are rebuilding their lives.
- **Harm reduction.** HeNN features information about topics including where to safely dispose of unused medications and where to get training on providing emergency overdose treatment (administering naloxone).

The app has won praise from those working to combat the opioid crisis. Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall-Long, who leads the state's Behavioral Health Consortium and is also a UD nursing professor, said access to treatment is a continuing concern.

"The development of HeNN ... enables individuals, treatment professionals and significant others the ability to connect with needed resources and services in near real time," she said. "The peer network facilitates meaningful feedback relative to access, which will promote improvement where it is needed the most."

Dr. Karyl Rattay, director of Delaware's Division of Public Health and

chair of the state's Addiction Action Committee, said the "events" section will be particularly helpful.

"No matter whether you are in recovery and need to identify the nearest support meeting, or you are a family or community member who wants to get training on how to administer naloxone so that you are prepared to respond in the event of an overdose, the events section will provide you with updated information on where to go for what you need," she said. "The HeNN app also connects users to HelpIsHereDE, the state's one-stop online source of information on prevention, treatment, recovery and harm reduction."

Elizabeth Romero, director of Delaware's Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, said HeNN complements the state's comprehensive online behavioral health referral system for [health care providers](#), the Delaware Treatment and Referral Network (DTRN). That network allows patients to be transitioned through electronic referrals to behavioral health providers in the state that match the level of care needed.

"Technology is advancing when it comes to connectivity to treatment services," Romero said. "So many individuals and families in our state can benefit from well-designed tools that support their journey to recovery."

In the future, the HeNN team hopes to incorporate services from surrounding areas, including Philadelphia and northern Maryland, and to expand resources and services that address mental health and general health.

"The app has been designed in a way that can be easily scaled to more services with minimum manual effort," Fang said.

Provided by University of Delaware

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