

# Need for Statewide Expansion of Critical Services

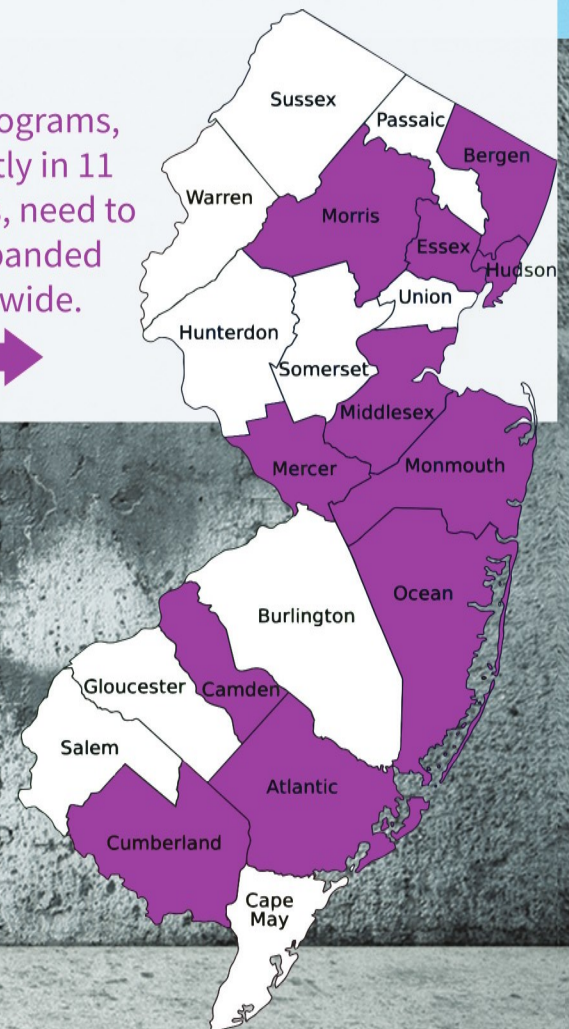
The Early Intervention Support Services (EISS) program, which works in tandem with emergency screening centers, exists in only 11 of New Jersey's 21 counties (highlighted in red on the map), leaving individuals in other areas of the state unable to access these critical mental health crisis services.

EISS has been proven to be a very successful and cost-efficient solution to long waits for outpatient services, which average four to six weeks, and high rates of emergency room visits and hospitalizations. EISS programs provide crisis intervention and stabilization while individuals wait for openings in outpatient programs. All EISS programs operate seven days a week and guarantee that clients will be seen within 24 hours. In addition, each client sees a prescriber within 24 hours of the intake session. Clearly, this program needs to be expanded to all counties throughout the state.

Screening services also need to be expanded. Currently, there are 35 screening centers throughout the state. A handful of the screening centers have been able to better serve their designated geographic region by expanding outreach, mobile services and satellite offices with alternate funding sources. Such funding mixes are not reliable from year to year. Funding must be made available to existing screening centers to allow each program to expand according to the specific needs of the geographic area they serve to achieve the greatest benefits from this resource which reduces emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

The Medication Assisted Treatment Initiative (MATI) also needs to be expanded. This evidence-based model for treating substance use disorders should be available to all New Jersey residents. Currently, 40 substance use treatment providers participate in MATI with 54 programs throughout the state. This is far from the number of providers needed, considering the high, and increasing use of opioids and other substances throughout New Jersey. The MATI includes the use of medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of addictions, as well as counseling. The effectiveness of the MATI has been demonstrated by local providers, as well as nationally. In 2017, one New Jersey provider reported a 70% reduction in substance use; 78% compliance with treatment plan goals; and 94% reduction of criminal activity among its MATI clients. Another New Jersey agency reported that 81.5% of clients responding to a survey indicated life had improved since entering the program and 71.5% of urine drug screens showed that no drugs were present.

EISS programs, currently in 11 counties, need to be expanded statewide.



“Leonard” began substance use treatment in 2012, when he had been using 15 to 20 bags of heroin intravenously on a daily basis. He was unemployed and living with a woman who was addicted to opioids. He had various legal charges and had been incarcerated previously. After his admission into the MATI, he still used some heroin sporadically during the first year. However, after a year, he began participating in an intensive outpatient program. He then attended weekly groups and individual counseling. Leonard has now been abstinent from illicit drugs for more than two and a half years. He is also gainfully employed and has purchased a home, where he lives with his new girlfriend, who is also drug free.