

Merrimack Valley Project Launches Wheels of Hope Ride Service for Those in Treatment



By [Nicholas DeBella](#) | February 14, 2020



Wheels of Hope, which provides free rides to treatment centers for those seeking help with substance abuse issues, is now serving area communities.

In coordination with, Lowell-based, Lucos Transportation, Wheels of Hope launched last month by the Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline. It gives rides to those who have a reserved bed at any treatment center in Massachusetts.

“MVP listened to multiple disciplines and community partners from across the Merrimack Valley. Over and over, transportation to inpatient treatment rose to the top of the list as a top barrier to recovery. This service seeks to remove

this barrier for people seeking help when they need it,” said Amy Tuneburg, a licensed independent clinical social worker.

Communities include Haverhill, Methuen, North Andover, West Newbury and Groveland.

The program replicates the 15-year-old Substance Abuse Treatment Enhance Program in Hartford, Conn., that provided help to thousands of residents who didn't have access to proper transportation to local recovery centers.

The Merrimack Valley Project was eventually proposed and accepted as a state budget amendment in 2019 by Sens. Diana DiZoglio, Ted M. Kennedy, Bruce E. Tarr, Barry R. Finegold, and Patrick O'Connor, providing the needed funds to launch the program.

The Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline is the only statewide public resource for finding substance use treatment and recovery services.

“Health Resources in Action is pleased to expand our Helpline services to offer transportation to substance use treatment through Wheels of Hope. With HRiA's history operating the Helpline for over 20 years, we recognize the barriers that lack of transportation can present to individuals seeking treatment. This is a landmark project in the Commonwealth and we are eager to see the impact Wheels of Hope will have across the Valley and beyond,” said Jennifer Toth, director of Substance Use Services with Health Resources in Action.

An individual may call the helpline to speak with a helpline specialist once they have reserved a bed at a treatment facility at 800-327-5050. The helpline is available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-10 p.m. and weekends 8 a.m.-6 p.m. The helpline is staffed by English and Spanish speaking specialists that will work with Lucos Transportation to confirm the pickup and drop-off locations.

For more information regarding Wheels of Hope, visit [HelplineMA.org](https://www.HelplineMA.org) or call 800-327-5050.