

Population and Community Health News

Advancing Health

MedStar Harbor Hospital

Overcoming
the stigma
of mental
illness.

Finding support
can lead to a better life.



INSIDE: Bridging the gaps to care. | Connecting with our community.

Letter from the President.



MedStar Health has long been dedicated to connecting all individuals in the communities we serve with the resources they need to live healthier lives. In this issue of *Advancing Health*, we feature some of the ways we are working to achieve this goal all across the Baltimore region.

You'll read about the wide array of behavioral health services we offer at MedStar Harbor Hospital. It's a fact that untreated behavioral and mental health disorders can have a lasting impact on a person's physical health. But with professional intervention, most individuals who have these disorders can find some degree of relief from their symptoms—with dramatic improvements that can lead to a better quality of life.

We also highlight how we are ensuring patients have the ongoing care they need to reduce hospital readmissions. While many factors contribute to a patient's likelihood of being readmitted to the hospital after an inpatient stay, a lack of appropriate follow-up care is one of the most common. Through the services of our Mobile Health Center, which meets people out in the community where they live and work, we are providing them with the tools they need to improve their overall health.

At MedStar Health, our goal is to deliver the right care at the right time in the right place to our communities. Through these collective efforts, we hope to make a lasting impact that will make a difference long into the future. It's how we treat people.

In good health,

Jill Donaldson, FACHE

President, MedStar Harbor Hospital
Senior Vice President, MedStar Health

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At MedStar Health, we offer easy access to great health care in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., via our 10 hospitals and more than 280 other care locations. We're also committed to advancing your care by continuously learning and applying new knowledge. We help our patients and their families feel understood, appreciated, and confident in their care. MedStar Harbor Hospital is proud to be part of MedStar Health. **It's how we treat people.**

Population and Community Health's mission: *Bridging gaps in health care by connecting the populations we serve with resources to enhance their health and wellbeing.*

On the cover: At MedStar Harbor Hospital, Ana Gutierrez Arango, a bilingual community health advocate, helps Spanish-speaking patients with behavioral health referrals and other resources.



Overcoming the stigma of mental illness.

Despite nationwide strides in awareness and advocacy, there is still a stigma associated with mental illness...a stigma that prevents many individuals from getting help. Yet untreated behavioral and mental health disorders can have a lasting impact on a person's physical health.

"Studies have shown that individuals with these disorders can have a 10-to-25-year reduction in life expectancy," says Crystal Watkins, MD, PhD, chair of the Department of Psychiatry at MedStar Harbor Hospital.

"These mortality rates are rarely caused by the symptoms of mental health conditions, but rather the effects these symptoms can have on a person's overall health and quality of life," Dr. Watkins explains. "Some symptoms increase the risk of factors that are known to decrease life expectancy such as chronic health conditions, infectious disease, substance abuse, poor self-care, and poverty. The good news is that professional interventions can have a dramatic and positive impact on health and longevity."

At MedStar Harbor, ensuring that individuals with behavioral and mental health disorders are provided with the care they need for as long as it is needed is a primary goal. "We offer a robust program with a wide variety of inpatient and outpatient services. Our inpatient unit features 36 beds for adults ages 18+ with an average length of stay of about 5 days. At discharge all patients are provided with resources appropriate to their situation," says Dr. Watkins.

"Our outpatient services include both a partial hospitalization and an intensive outpatient program and



Kristy Aquino, CHA; Samantha Sailsman, CCHW; Crystal Watkins, MD; and Nicole Kafka, LCSW-C, are part of the team who care for patients with behavioral health medical and social concerns at MedStar Harbor Hospital.

a clinic offering traditional therapy and psychiatry. Our Emergency department has a separate secured space for patients experiencing a psychiatric crisis and is staffed 24/7 by psychiatric nurses and counselors."

In addition to the stigma associated with mental illness, many individuals who need behavioral healthcare services often don't get ongoing care due to significant social needs that act as barriers to care. "Removing these barriers to care is the role of our community health advocates (CHAs)," Dr. Watkins says. "Our CHA, Kristy, provides essential support to individuals identified as at-risk by linking them to community-based services that can assist with needs such as housing, food access, transportation, and utility assistance, for example."

Another important CHA role is held by Ana Gutierrez Arango, who assists Spanish-speaking patients with limited English proficiency as part of Project BHEAM (Behavioral Health Equity Across Maryland), a Maryland

Department of Health-funded initiative. She helps these individuals navigate the complex web of social services available to them and their families.

"Ana works with entire families offering ongoing support, helping to arrange appointments and transportation, making sure patients are compliant with their medications, and more," she says. "She is in constant communication with Spanish-speaking patients and their families, who truly appreciate her assistance."

Dr. Watkins notes that thanks to the comprehensive behavioral health services the hospital offers and the efforts of the CHAs and the rest of her team, many patients are now getting the essential help they need. "With professional interventions, most individuals who have behavioral and mental health disorders can find at least some degree of relief from their symptoms, and many experience dramatic improvements that have a lasting impact on their health."

For more information about our services, visit [MedStarHealth.org/BehavioralHealth](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/BehavioralHealth).

Bridging the gaps to care.

Many factors contribute to a patient's likelihood of being readmitted to the hospital after an initial stay. One of the most common is a lack of appropriate follow-up care after discharge.

"While not all readmissions are avoidable, a portion of unplanned readmissions may be prevented by addressing the barriers that are keeping these patients from getting needed care," explains Luke Carlson, MD, medical director, Care Transformation for MedStar Health, Baltimore region. "We have a number of innovative initiatives in place designed to do just that."

"One of the most significant barriers to care for many individuals, especially in Baltimore City, is being able to get to a doctor's office," says Andrea Gaspar, MD, medical director of the MedStar Health Mobile Health Center. "In fact, the Community Health Needs Assessments that MedStar Harbor Hospital conducts every 3 years have consistently indicated that transportation issues make healthcare access a challenge for many city residents. The MedStar Health Mobile Health Center offers a solution."

Introduced in September 2020, the Mobile Health Center was made possible through a joint partnership between MedStar Harbor Hospital and MedStar Sports Medicine. "Its purpose is to help people in the community address medical issues and concerns by meeting them where they are; out in the community, in neighborhoods that are close to where people who face the greatest barriers to healthcare, live, and work," says Dr. Gaspar.



Pictured from the left outside the Mobile Health Center at MedStar Harbor Hospital are Shannon Holder, CRNP; Terri Langley, patient registrar; Andrea Gaspar, MD; and Tacey Lawson, community health advocate/MA.

Staffed by a team of expert clinical providers, the Mobile Health Center delivers quality, reliable, convenient, community-based care, providing useful information and tools to improve overall health and wellness.

"It's essentially a 'primary care center on wheels,' while also giving people with ongoing, chronic medical needs, such as behavioral health services, rapid HIV testing, and diabetes management services, a place to turn for guidance and connection," Dr. Gaspar adds.

The Mobile Health Center is available at the following locations every week, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.:

Tuesdays at The Transformation Center in Brooklyn
3701 4th St., Baltimore, MD 21225

Wednesdays at Drink at the Well in Curtis Bay
4710 Pennington Ave., Baltimore, MD 21226

Thursdays at the Cherry Hill Tenant Association in Cherry Hill
2700 Spelman Rd., Baltimore, MD 21225

The Mobile Health Center is out in the community visiting various neighborhoods across Baltimore City on Mondays and Fridays. Locations vary on a weekly basis. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are encouraged, and can be scheduled by calling **410-350-7511**.



Tacey Lawson, community health advocate/MA, assists Andrea Gaspar, MD, with a patient inside the Mobile Health Center.

Learn more by visiting
[MedStarHealth.org/MobileHealthCenter](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/MobileHealthCenter).

Connecting with our community.

Population and Community Health teams throughout the Baltimore region are dedicated to connecting neighbors with programs and services. Whether it's providing health information about tobacco cessation, diabetes prevention, or mental health—printed in English and Spanish—or sharing resources that can help with food disparities, legal services, or housing, our teams are bringing support to your neighborhoods.

Below are some of our recent outreach events.



▲ The mobile dental service was provided in partnership with the National Prison Fellowship and the Transformation Center. Dental Innovations of Virginia (DIVA) traveled from Leesburg, Virginia to provide free dental services to more than 30 community members. The MedStar Health Community Health team provided resources and health screenings.



▲ Interns from the University of Maryland and Towson University, and the Community Health staff demonstrated Be the Beat hands-only CPR compressions at the Cherry Hill Tenant Homes. In partnership with the American Heart Association, Be the Beat teaches people to use the rhythm of a song to guide them in chest compressions that can help save lives.



▲ MedStar Harbor Hospital executive leaders volunteered at the Homeless Outreach Event at Potee Street in partnership with The Franciscan Center. MedStar Health and partners provided food, medical and social resources, and health promotional materials at the homeless encampment site.

Community class schedules.

At MedStar Health, we care about the health and wellness of our community. One of the ways we try to keep you healthy and active is by offering a variety of free and low-cost special classes, events, and screenings at our local MedStar Health hospitals. They include the following:

CANCER PREVENTION

Breast and Cervical Cancer Screenings

Free mammograms and clinical breast exams for women ages 40 and older who live in Baltimore City. Free pap tests for women between ages 21 to 39 who live in Baltimore City. Call **410-350-2066** for details.



Colon Cancer Screening

Free colon cancer screenings for uninsured men and women ages 45 or older, or younger with symptoms or family history, who live in Baltimore City, or Anne Arundel, Baltimore, or Howard counties. Call **410-350-8216** to learn more.

Lung Cancer Screening

Free lung cancer screenings for uninsured women and men ages 50 or older, who currently smoke or have quit in the past 15 years, and live in Baltimore City or Anne Arundel County. Call **410-350-8216** for more information.

DIABETES PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

Diabetes Prevention Program

A free program for people at risk for developing type 2 diabetes, with the goal of preventing or delaying the disease. Lifestyle change, 12-month program. Offered virtually or in person. Call **855-218-2435** for details.

Diabetes Education

If you have diabetes, our educational classes can teach you about self-management of your disease, medical nutrition therapy, continuous glucose monitoring, and more. Virtual appointments are available.

Call **443-777-6528** for MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center; **443-444-4193** for MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital; and **410-554-4511** for MedStar Union Memorial Hospital appointments.

Gestational Diabetes Education

This class will assist gestational diabetic women with maintaining blood sugar control through monitoring, diet, exercise, and medication instruction (if needed) for a safe pregnancy.

Call **443-777-6528** to learn more.

HEART AND LUNG HEALTH

Cardiac Rehabilitation Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Call **443-444-3397** for more information.

Phase III General Exercise Program

Call **443-444-3881** for more information.

Congestive Heart Failure Clinic

Call **443-444-5993** for details.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Contact the emails below to see if the group is virtual or in person.

Amputee Support Group

Email jennifer.mcdivitt@medstar.net for details.

Aphasia Support Group

Aphasia is a language disorder due to illness.

Email kate.c.gerber@medstar.net for details.

Concussion Support Group

Email kate.c.gerber@medstar.net for details.

Diabetes Support Group

Email debbie.kavanagh@medstar.net for details.

Stroke Support Group

Email kate.c.gerber@medstar.net for details.



WELLNESS AND PREVENTION

Tobacco Cessation

Learn to quit smoking with support from our certified tobacco cessation experts. Free virtual or in-person classes.

Call **855-218-2435** or visit [MedStarHealth.org/StopSmoking](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/StopSmoking).



PARKINSON'S DISEASE FITNESS

Aquatics for Parkinson's Disease Rock Steady Boxing

Call **443-444-4600** for details.



BIRTH AND FAMILY SERVICES

Birth and family services are offered in the MedStar Health, Baltimore region at MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center and MedStar Harbor Hospital.

Take our virtual tours by scanning this QR code with your mobile phone camera feature:



CLASSES

Prepared Childbirth Classes

Preparing mother and her birth partner for labor and childbirth. Offered 1 full day or as a 4-week series (1 night/week).

Breastfeeding: Facts, Myths, and Techniques

Taught by a board-certified lactation consultant, this course is designed to prepare pregnant couples to get breastfeeding off to a great start.

Infant Care and Safety Class

This class is designed for expectant and new parents, grandparents, and babysitters. Learn bathing, diapering, and other skills to care for your baby.

Infant and Child CPR

Ideal for expectant parents, daycare providers, and loved ones caring for your baby.

Infant and Child First Aid

Classes can be taken separately or together with CPR (discount applies if taken at the same time).

Classes meet the State requirement for daycare providers.

Breastfeeding Support Groups

Facilitated by breastfeeding specialists, these groups provide clinical support to new moms while providing a place to build relationships with other new moms.

Virtual and in-person support groups held weekly.

Virtual support group: Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to noon

In-person support groups, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at these locations:

Tuesdays in Brooklyn - City of Refuge
 Wednesdays in Essex - Essex Library
 Thursdays in Dundalk - North Point Library

Contact susanna.k.derocco@medstar.net for details.

NEW eCLASSES hosted by MedStar Health

We are excited to have partnered with InJoy Health Education to provide a variety of online eClasses to help our communities and our patients prepare for pregnancy, labor, birth, and caring for their newborn. Topics include:

- Multiples
- Your Newborn
- Cesarean Section
- Grandparenting
- Childbirth
- Breastfeeding
- Natural Childbirth
- Fatherhood

For details on classes, tours, support groups, and eClasses, scan the QR code with your smart phone or visit [MedStarHealth.org/BirthandFamilyClasses](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/BirthandFamilyClasses).

For questions on any of these classes, contact beth.kegley@medstar.net.

To register online, visit: [MedStarHealth.org/BirthandFamilyClasses](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/BirthandFamilyClasses) or call 888-746-2852.

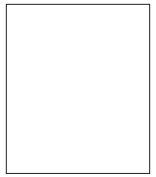




MedStar Health

5601 Loch Raven Blvd.
Baltimore, MD 21239

855-218-2435



MedStar Health Social Needs Program

Connect to free and low-cost services in your community.



Education, employment, food security, housing, safety, social support, and transportation are all factors that affect health and well-being. Yet many individuals and families struggle to address these needs on a daily basis. The MedStar Health Social Needs program can help.

SocialNeeds.MedStarHealth.org

is an online tool used to easily and quickly connect those in need with free or low-cost resources and services in their community. This publicly accessible tool allows community members to search for various services for themselves or on behalf of family members, friends, or neighbors. Meal delivery, medical care, rent, ride-share programs, and utility assistance are just a few of the search options available by zip code in a wide range of languages.

Social needs program.

Find the resources you need and get connected... all in one place!



GOODS



WORK



TRANSIT



MONEY



FOOD



HOUSING



EDUCATION



LEGAL



HEALTH

SocialNeeds.MedStarHealth.org

To connect to the resources and services you need, visit SocialNeeds.MedStarHealth.org