



Riverbend Resources If You Struggle With Addiction

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RIVERBEND - Substance use disorders affect more than 20 million people in the U.S., not including the loved ones who are impacted as well.

Today, Aug. 31, is International Overdose Awareness Day. It's a difficult and often taboo experience, but addiction is more common than you might think. And with several support groups, treatment options and harm reduction tools in the Riverbend area, it's not something that you or your loved ones have to go through alone.

LOCAL TREATMENT OPTIONS

The decision to recover isn't an easy one to make, but it's a liberating first step for a lot of people. Ty Bechel, the executive director of Amare, emphasized that each person has unique needs that guide their recovery, and services like Amare aim to meet those needs on an individual basis.

“When we're stuck in addiction, we have to recover really for us. It's when we desire a better life,” Bechel said. “They can make better decisions, and they deserve to make better decisions for them...That's what we're here for as a recovery staff: allowing them to learn that hey, you are supported. We do believe in you, and you can have a hell of a better life than what you have now. You just got to be able to put in the work.”

As a nonprofit, Amare is “very, very much community-based and holistically focused on working with individuals,” Bechel said. Most staff members are in long-term recovery themselves. They help each person make their own recovery plan, and they offer recovery coaching and family support. They can also connect clients to other services in the area like Centerstone or [Chestnut Health Systems](#), which both have addiction programs.

Centerstone has a long [list of addiction treatment options](#). Director of Clinical Services Stacy Seitz explained that their holistic approach allows clients to focus on recovering.

“It's hard to say, ‘Let's focus on your recovery’ when you don't know where you're going to sleep tonight,” Seitz said. “So we want to meet those basic needs in order to then help them with those clinical needs. Unfortunately, we see a lot of folks with trauma and things that they need to work through to support their recovery and get to a more stable place.”

Seitz said that medication-assisted treatment is the most sought-after service at their Alton location, with approximately 230 people currently receiving methadone treatment. Medications like methadone, Suboxone and Vivitrol help mitigate the physical effects of opiate withdrawal, which makes it easier to engage with counseling or other supports that build toward long-term recovery.

“If you're sick and you have the flu, do you think that you would want to go to counseling and process the negative things that might have happened in your life?” Seitz summarized. “So if we can address those physical symptoms and the cravings, then we can really dive into the more clinical issues.”

This is one of many options for people who are struggling with substance use. Like Amare, Centerstone will work with you to determine what services would be the best fit; all it takes is a phone call.

“The most important thing to know is that it’s a process, and it’s not perfect,” Seitz said. “It’s a process and it’s a rebuild...If you want to start that process today, you can.”

HARM REDUCTION: STAY SAFE ON SUBSTANCES

If you’re not ready to seek treatment or stop using, there are ways to make substance use safer so that you can mitigate your risk of death or injury.

Narcan is a great example. This medication reverses an opioid overdose. It can be administered through a nasal spray or injection. This is a life-saving medication, but still call 911 after administering Narcan. Someone who has overdosed always needs medical care, but Narcan can keep them alive until first responders arrive.

It’s helpful to know the [signs of an opioid overdose](#) and to keep Narcan on you, whether you take opioids or not. Amare and Centerstone are both local Narcan distribution centers. You can contact them or go to either facility to pick up Narcan for free.

You can also buy Narcan at a pharmacy. Most pharmacies keep it behind the counter, but you don’t need a prescription. A lot of health insurance plans, including Medicare and Medicaid plans, will cover the cost, at least partially. If you don’t have insurance, you can usually buy Narcan for a little less than \$50.

Fentanyl testing strips are another way to keep safe. Fentanyl has made headlines as a synthetic opioid that’s usually mixed with other drugs, like cocaine and heroin, often without the consumer’s knowledge. Similarly, the tranquilizer [xylazine](#) has been present in a growing number of overdose deaths, having been mixed and unknowingly consumed much like fentanyl.

Centerstone has fentanyl and xylazine test strips so you can test your substance to make sure you aren’t ingesting these deadly compounds. You can also order test strips online, and more organizations are starting to supply them.

“Those three things are always available to anybody that would ask for them,” Seitz said. “We always have Narcan available to anybody, so anybody can walk in from the community. You don’t need to be a client. You can be a family member.”

Both Seitz and Bechel noted that you can pick up test strips or Narcan from their organizations, no questions asked. If you want to remain anonymous, you can contact them to coordinate a way for them to drop off or mail supplies to you.

RECOVER WITH PEOPLE WHO RELATE

Centerstone, Amare and Chestnut Health Systems are organizations that offer clinical support, like professional counseling. A lot of people find these services life-saving, but it's also helpful to have additional support while you work with healthcare professionals, if you're attempting to get clean without professional help, after you've been discharged from in-patient care, or as an extra boost throughout long-term recovery.

[Alcoholics Anonymous \(AA\)](#), [Narcotics Anonymous \(NA\)](#) and [Celebrate Recovery](#) are three tried-and-true support groups, with millions of members worldwide. There are several meetings of each group throughout the Riverbend area. You can research "AA near me," for example, for a full list of meetings at different times and locations, so you can choose the group and meeting that's best for you.

"Our goal is to hopefully get involved in those types of communities so they can have additional support, because connection is huge," Bechel said.

Whether you're in active addiction or recovery, these groups can be a great place to talk with people who share your experiences. No matter what your story is, you deserve that support.

"robs the voice of the individual," Bechel added. "Everybody's like, 'You got to stop doing this. You got to stop messing up.' You don't necessarily want to be someone that is struggling from a substance use disorder and constantly in this act of addiction. You don't want that. But it has hijacked your mind. It has hijacked what you do. And you have to try to get behind that and be taught that you can make better decisions, and this recovery plan can be yours."

You can have a better life. Visit Centerstone's [official website](#) or Amare's [official website](#) for more information about their services. You can contact the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's national helpline](#) at 1-800-662-4357 for additional support.