

**The R.O.S.E. Program: Bringing Overdose Prevention to the Local Restaurant
Community: *How Pennel Mental Health Center is Partnering with Local Restaurants to
Save Lives***

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Abstract

In September 2025, Pennel Mental Health Center (Pennel) in Langhorne, PA, launched a community-based restaurant outreach and education program designed to help restaurant ownership and staff better understand the signs of a potential opioid overdose and how to respond in the moment to help protect customers, staff, or staff families. The program also educates restaurant staff regarding the impacts of opioid use and available community resources they can access.

Known as the R.O.S.E. program (Restaurant Outreach, Support and Education), the program was modeled after the state of Delaware's Restaurant Accolade Program, which has shown excellent results since it was launched in 2019. The Restaurant Accolade Program was developed to support Delaware's fight against the opioid crisis and save lives through the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH), with technical assistance from Health Management Associates (HMA).

On the day of the initial launch of R.O.S.E., the Pennel Team, with support from HMA, trained five restaurants with 38 participants.

Introduction

In September 2025, Pennel Mental Health Center (Pennel) in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, launched the R.O.S.E. Program (Restaurant Outreach, Support, and Education), a community-based initiative that equips restaurant owners and staff to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose. R.O.S.E. is designed to help restaurant teams identify the signs of an overdose, administer Narcan (naloxone), and connect with local support services.

The program is simple: Pennel staff visit local restaurants and offer immediate training to available staff. Each participant receives a kit containing two doses of Narcan, instructions for use, fentanyl test strips, a face shield, gloves, and information on community resources. The program's goal is to provide lifesaving tools, knowledge, and support to the restaurant workforce.

Why focus on restaurants?

- The CDC has identified restaurants as one of the industries whose workforce has a high incidence of overdose.
- By going directly to restaurants, Penndel can train staff in a location where they will be supported in their efforts to save a life or stay sober if they are in recovery.
- This model promotes workplace safety and sobriety by helping staff recognize that their employers support recovery and expect a safe, substance-free work environment.
- The program prevents overdoses by ensuring Narcan is available to each staff member for use not only in the restaurant but in their community as well.
- Training participants are given local treatment and recovery resources to help connect them to care.

Learning from Delaware's Success

R.O.S.E. is modeled after the state of Delaware's Restaurant Accolade Program, which has shown excellent results since it was launched in 2019. The Restaurant Accolade Program was developed to support Delaware's fight against the opioid crisis and save lives through the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH), with technical assistance from Health Management Associates (HMA). HMA has led the work on the ground in Delaware, providing a consultant who goes directly to the restaurants to meet and provide training, as well as strategic vision and collaboration with state health and human services leadership. The program is still going strong in Delaware, now overseen by the Delaware Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH). It has matured into multiple tiers of training and recognizes restaurants that give back to their communities and act as agents of change in preventing overdose deaths.

The Restaurant Accolade Program's Impact in Delaware

- Outreach to 498 restaurants statewide
- Overdose prevention and response training provided to 285 restaurants at the Bronze Accolade level
- 112 restaurants elevated to the Silver Accolade level, where they designate a staff member to offer peer support and connect colleagues to resources
- 21 restaurants trained at the Gold Accolade level, focusing on policies that promote recovery-friendly workplaces
- 1,354 restaurant staff trained to identify an overdose and administer naloxone
- 2,083 naloxone kits distributed through the program
- Most importantly, the Restaurant Accolade Program has had four reported reversals where a restaurant worker was able to save a life.

How R.O.S.E. Came to Bucks County

Upon seeing data from the Restaurant Accolade Program, Penndel's leadership saw an opportunity to replicate the model locally. The agency submitted a grant proposal to the Bucks

County Opioid Settlement Fund to receive training and support from HMA to adapt the program to Bucks County. Pennadel partnered with the Bucks County Drug and Alcohol Commission (BCDAC) to provide Narcan kits and other harm reduction tools. Hoping to have similar impact, the powerful partnership of Pennadel and BCDAC looked to HMA to train an initial cohort of five Pennadel staff with the knowledge to confidently approach restaurants to offer the training and tools. Understanding that stigma and misinformation can create hesitation, especially for family-owned businesses and those with young staff members, HMA provided Pennadel with key education points for restaurant owners:

- There are no Pennsylvania or Bucks County laws prohibiting overdose prevention or naloxone training for adults or minors in workplaces.
- Participation can always be optional for underage employees; employers can decide which staff are trained.
- This is about lifesaving first aid, not drug use. The training teaches what to do in an emergency, just like CPR or using an AED.
- Bucks County has experienced overdoses in public places. This training supports community safety and helps staff of any age recognize emergencies and get help quickly.
- Pennsylvania's Good Samaritan Law (Act 139) protects individuals and businesses that act in good faith to save a life from overdose.
- Narcan is non-addictive, safe, and has no effect on people who haven't used opioids. It's a standard emergency medication that can save lives, much like an EpiPen or CPR. Training young staff empowers them to act responsibly—it doesn't encourage drug use.

Early Results

Pennadel's first day of outreach provided some significant positive interactions with local restaurants, as well as the identification of some challenges. Without prearranged appointments, the R.O.S.E. team visited several local restaurants to offer free on-site training. The response was encouraging; Five restaurants accepted the offer, and 38 staff members completed Narcan training in a single day. Some restaurants requested follow-up visits to train the rest of their staff during staff meetings or closed hours. Each participating restaurant received a certificate and recognition on the Pennadel website and social media.

Not all restaurants were prepared to participate immediately. Some managers expressed interest but asked to discuss the idea with ownership before committing. Others were unfamiliar with Narcan or hesitant to participate due to stigma surrounding substance use. Even so, many of those who declined to participate offered positive feedback on the initiative, indicating that open, respectful outreach can begin to change perceptions.

Following the initial rollout and outreach, Pennadel staff have continued the work, now visiting local restaurants independently, building relationships, and expanding participation.

Measuring Success

The goal for the first year will be to bring the R.O.S.E. program to 10 restaurants in the local area, training 100-200 staff members across Lower Bucks County. Penn-del will be working with the Public Health Management Corporation to track program outputs and outcomes, such as:

- Quantifying the outreach to the community restaurants
- Number of training sessions provided and attendees
- Number of Narcan kits distributed and where (zip code)

Over time, we expect to be able to track “Narcan Saves” in restaurants.

Looking Ahead

R.O.S.E. is still in its early stages, but its foundation is strong. By combining Delaware’s proven framework with Bucks County’s community partnerships, the program is creating a model for sustainable, local overdose prevention.

Over the coming year, Penn-del Mental Health Center will continue working alongside the Bucks County Drug and Alcohol Commission and Health Management Associates to expand training, strengthen restaurant engagement, and deepen community impact.

Each new training represents a restaurant better prepared to respond to a crisis and a community better equipped to prevent tragedy. Through collaboration, education, and compassion, R.O.S.E. is helping Bucks County build a safer, more informed, and more connected future.