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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Guardian Recovery Network announces the ongoing expansion of [Guardian Virtual](#), an online intensive outpatient program (IOP) now available to Florida, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, and Colorado residents. The virtual IOP program is on track to increase access to all 50 states within the next 2 to 4 years.



For over 15 years, Guardian Recovery Network has expanded access to effective and affordable addiction treatment options nationwide. Guardian Virtual breaks barriers many face when seeking professional substance use disorder treatment, including financial restrictions and lack of reliable transportation to and from treatment.

Expanding access to effective, evidence-based treatments for those with substance use disorders is critical to reducing the growing number of accidental, drug-related fatalities across the country. Increased access to care will also improve overall quality of life for those with addiction and co-occurring issues.

Guardian Virtual is conducted through [Sober Peer](#), an AI-powered mobile health app developed to help those in need of more accessible treatment options and to keep newly sober individuals connected and accountable.

"There are unique benefits specific to participating in virtual treatment," explains Ryan Soave, Chief Clinical Officer at Guardian Recovery Network. "Not everyone has the ability to travel to receive the clinical care they need. A person may not be able to afford the time spent commuting to an in-person facility. Maybe they can't afford childcare, or they live in a rural part of the

country and have limited access to quality treatment services. We are dedicated to breaking down these barriers and increasing access to effective care."

Additionally, the virtual treatment model prevents individuals from disengaging with treatment too soon, improving long-term outcomes and preventing relapse. "Even with a full continuum of care in place, the majority of people return home after detox," says Josh Foster, Guardian Recovery Network's Chief Operating Officer. "We wanted to ensure there was another discharge option in place."

The convenience and accessibility of virtual programming appeal to those who require continued care but are unwilling or unable to attend residential treatment or commit to an in-person IOP. "With Guardian Virtual, all you have to do is download the app and log in. You can access service from just about anywhere," Foster adds.

The Benefits of Virtual vs. Traditional IOP

Virtual IOP serves as an ideal step-down level of care for those who have already been to detox and residential treatment. The unique program builds on counselor and peer relationships forged during earlier stages of the treatment process.

"People who are at the IOP level of care have often started to build their lives back," says Soave. "They have jobs, return to their families, and begin reintegrating into society. They can receive quality care for their substance use and mental health disorders while continuing to build their lives in their own environments."

Cost-effectiveness is also key. "The affordability piece also plays an important role," he explains. "In many cases, regional or national health insurance policies will cover our virtual program substantially or in full. [Virtual addiction treatment](#) is significantly more affordable than traditional, residential care."

A Virtual Platform Designed to Mirror In-Person Care

Guardian Virtual was designed to mirror in-person care, providing clients with a fully immersive treatment experience.

"Over the past few months, we have been continuously honing the program, working to better understand the distinct nuances of a virtual environment," Soave says. "Our technology platform is highly integrated. It is designed to provide a seamless continuum of care. We want people to feel as if they're walking into a treatment center, not just signing into an online meeting. It's immersive. We provide all of the same services a person would get should they walk into one of our brick-and-mortar facilities."

Virtual programming provided by Guardian Recovery Network is just as comprehensive as traditional, in-person treatment.

"We offer medication management and psychiatric visits," says Soave. "We're able to provide drug testing. We offer a breathalyzer that connects directly to the client's cellphone and links directly to an electronic medical record. We offer geofencing, which allows the clients to mark areas that might be considered positive or negative. If they go to a high-risk location, a notification is sent to their therapist, and they can process their motivation and experience in a group setting."

The Virtual Treatment Model

The treatment app takes advantage of the latest AI technology and combines that with programming led by real, licensed clinical staff. IOP group sessions take place four times a week in 3-hour sessions.

"The program also includes a weekly individual session during which a client will work with their therapist, fleshing out their treatment plan and identifying personal treatment goals. Our program covers much more than pinpointing problem areas and examining what has held clients back. Instead, we focus on the goals they have as they relate to the life they want to build for themselves," Soave adds.

Guardian Virtual also includes a weekly family support group and a step-down outpatient program for those who have completed the IOP and want to continue with individual and group sessions weekly.

"If a person has been struggling with substance use and they need help, we want to ensure that effective help is available to them, regardless of their circumstances," concludes Soave. "With Guardian Virtual we can truly meet clients where they are."

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