

COLORADO SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREND AND RESPONSE TASK FORCE

August 3, 2018
10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Colorado Municipal League
1144 Sherman St., Denver

Minutes

Chair – Attorney General Cynthia Coffman

Vice –Chairs:

- *Treatment* – Marc Condojani, Director, Adult Treatment & Recovery Programs, Office of Behavioral Health, Colorado Dept. of Human Services
- *Prevention* – José Esquibel, Director, Office of Community Engagement, Colorado Dept. of Law/Colorado Office of the Attorney General
- *Law Enforcement* – Chief Rick Brandt, Evans Police Department

Attendees: *Adam Zarrin, Jenny Wood, Lisa Noble, Liz Hickman, Greg Daniels, Kathi Wells, Peggy Heil, Colleen Brisnehan, Amy Kingery, Lindsey Myers, Lucinda Connelly, Robert Valuck, Whitney Hickman, Ashely Chase, Stazi Snelling, Jade Woodard, Rick Brandt, Marc Condojani, Cynthia Coffman*

Guests: *Kent MacLennan, Pauline Whelan, Henny Lasley, Stephanie Russell, Katelyn Hall, Barbara Gabella, Meredith Davis, Kacy Crawford, Linda Hughes, Eileen Forlenza, Qing Li*

Announcements/Updates:

- Attorney General Coffman announced that her office has hired 9 lawyers for the opioid team as part of the Consumer protection Section to work on the investigation of at least one pharmaceutical company in regard to the opioid crisis. This is in preparation for major litigation.
- The Office of Behavioral Health received new two-year grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration for addressing the opioid crisis.
- The Center for Disease Control will be releasing a grant application in September with funds available for addressing the opioid crisis.

Study Committee on Opioids and Other Substance Use Disorders

The Study Committee held a meeting on July 20th and has four meetings set to develop bills for the 2019 legislative session. José Esquibel and Rob Valuck are working with the chair and vice chair of the Study Committee on suggested areas of focus.

A legislative plan is needed to develop a strategic plan for integrating recovery into the 'Continuum of Care.' The Recovery Work group of the Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse has the experts in the area to help inform members of the Study Committee.

More work needs to be done to spread awareness about Naloxone and assist with regular access to Naxolone.

More support is needed to continue to conduct provider education in order to reach as many as 24,000 prescribers in Colorado.

It is still essential to promote awareness across the state for safe disposal of household medications, especially prescribed opioids.

State Substance Abuse Data Trends

The PowerPoint presentations will be posted on the Task Force web page.

- a. **Public Health Drug Use Data and Trends**
Barbara Gabella, Senior Scientist in Injury Epidemiology
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE)
Katelyn Hall, Statistical Analyst, Marijuana Health Monitoring and Research, CDPHE
- b. **Public Health Drug Use Data and Trends Continued**
Kacy Crawford, Alcohol Epidemiologist, CDPHE
- c. **Treatment Admissions Drug Use Data and Trends**
Stephanie Russell, Evaluator, Office of Behavioral Health
Colorado Department of Human Services

Discussion points/questions/ideas following presentations:

- The data indicates that Colorado ranks high for opioid deaths and that this rate is going up, and this is particularly seen in coroner reports
 - The rate of overdose deaths from each specific drug was not mentioned in coroner reports.
 - The drug increase may be due to better reporting from coroners.
 - What barriers are there for coroners to do more thorough screenings?

Answer: Funding

- Idea: Have a fund for coroners to use if a toxicity screen is warranted.
- Question: If an individual dies by suicide and there is a toxicity screen, is there a way to show if the overdose was intentional or not intentional? No one present had an answer for this question.

- Research is showing that there is an increase in alcohol use in third trimester pregnancies.
 - Question -- Is that a random outlier? There has been so much education about alcohol during pregnancy how is this number going up?
- There is a stigma around the use of Suboxone. Medication Assisted Treatment for an opioid use disorder needs to be thought about in the same way treatment is thought of for any disease. For diabetes there is insulin, for opioid use disorders there is Suboxone, as well as other approved medication assisted treatments.
 - Stigma is being addressed in our state with the Lift The Label campaign
 - Mobile health units are being deployed and include getting Narcan in rural areas
- Data on treatment admissions indicates that there is an increase in people seeking treatment, which is a very good statistic.
- Awareness of treatment centers is not getting out to the public. More people need to know about the location and other aspects of treatment that is available. We need to put information out to the public in a way that is easy to access, easy to find treatment for people that are desperate.
- Most substance abuse treatment is outpatient, rather than inpatient.
- Sober living facilities are not licensed and there are concerns that there is generally limited or no structure to the programs of these facilities.
- There is data about who is in treatment, but there are gaps in the data from rural areas and areas where there is little access to treatment facilities.
- ‘Dabbing’ is on the radar, but at this time it is not being studied.
- Substance abuse education should start in kindergarten and elementary school -- use the public health model for tobacco. The challenges is that there is pushback from schools for this early approach.
- Question: Should the Task Force look at regulating THC levels? Currently, the percentage of THC in marijuana products is not listed. This would be similar to the listing of the percent of alcohol in various alcoholic beverages.