



# Substance Abuse Trend and Response Task Force Meeting Minutes

February 3, 2023

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*Membership Present:* Phil Weiser, Matt Holtmann, Dante Gonzales, Tiasha Fernando Bachrach, Julia Roguski, Rick Brandt, Jose Esquibel, Erin Crites, Jessica Sandgren, Alex Wolff, Joy Hart, Lynette Myers, Brandon Davis, Wendy Buxton-Andrade, Jamie FitzSimons, Kathryn Wells, Andres Guerrero

*DOL Staff:* Heidi Williams, Jamie Feld, Jack Patterson, Mindy Baumgardner, Robyn Steuer

*Guests:* Jennifer Yates, Ellen Velez, Hannah Nibauer, Shayna Swain, Lesley McConnell, Lori Spurgeon, Kristina Green, Liz Bielecki, Avani Dilger, Bailey McGuinness, Brandon Zelasko, Katie Gelman, Tim Kitchens, Shannon Bryan

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## Introduction

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

## Opioid Settlement Distribution Update and Priorities Discussion

For questions and comments, email [opioids@coag.gov](mailto:opioids@coag.gov).

New settlements announced totaling \$200+ million.

Funds distributed in 2022: \$23 million to 16 regions, \$4 million to 78 local governments.

Colorado Opioid Abatement Council formed 4 committees (admin., assistance, review, and evaluation) and adopted policies related to organization, infrastructure funds, 2-year plan review and funding request, regional share remedial procedures, and infrastructure share remedial procedures.

Potential 2023 state activities: opioid and fentanyl prevention RFP, innovation, tribes, research on MAT, regional technical assistance, and state agency collaboration.

Overview of 2023 timeline for plan submissions/amendments/requests.

2023 Conference in Montrose, CO August 16-18.

Attorney General Weiser welcomed the feedback of the group on the expended state funds for the state awareness campaign.

Jose Esquibel spoke of the increased interest by schools in educational programs to address prevalence of fentanyl but highlighted a shortage of staff to respond to this demand. There is also uncertainty whether naloxone can be carried by children in school settings, according to Jose.

Heidi Williams offered the option to host webinars on these topics.

Attorney General Weiser reiterated the role that the state awareness campaign will play in addressing this need but encouraged continued exploration of other resources and channels to raise awareness.

Heidi Williams reiterated that all of the materials that emerge from the awareness campaign will be available to partners throughout the state.

Attendees spoke of the power of giving people in recovery an opportunity to share their stories and reiterated the value of peer-to-peer messaging.

Attorney General Weiser invited the group to continue the discussion.

### *Legislative Update by Jeff Riester*

High-level overview was provided for the following bills:

House Bill 23-1164 (Opioid Harm Reduction)

Senate Bill 23-009 (Limit Opioid Prescription and Exception for Intractable Pain)

Senate Bill 23-109 (Criminal Penalty Controlled Substance Supplier)

Jose Esquibel, from a harm reduction perspective, raised concerns that SB-109 may unintentionally penalize substance users.

Jeff Riester provided a brief preview of upcoming ballot initiatives.

Attorney General Weiser emphasized that Jeff Riester is the point-person for questions regarding pending legislation.

Attendee asked if prop 122 will create a retail market for mushrooms, similar to marijuana. Attorney General clarified that is not the intention, according to ballot language, but acknowledged the uncertainty of the future path.

The group discussed the need for safe storage as a consideration factor for whether minors are at risk from substances like marijuana and psychedelics.

Attorney General Weiser mentioned that synthetic products can have higher, sometimes dangerous, potency levels, which is a factor to consider when assessing impacts on the population.

Brandon Davis reiterated that the Governor's office is working closely on the issues of mushrooms and psilocybin and is keeping a close eye on the implementation of the proposition. Brandon highlighted his office's commitment to honoring the will of the voters while also acknowledging the potential impacts to young people.

Attorney General closed the legislative report.

### *Social Media Report – Shalyn Kettering and Hanna Bustillo, CO Dept. of Law*

Hanna Bustillo introduced the research project which covers the overall background on the dangers of fentanyl, including public health and public safety, features on social media platforms that allow online drug sellers to perpetuate their criminal behavior, and recommendations by the Colorado Department of Law to help mitigate these threats. [Click here](#) for the full report.

Attendee asked how the members of the task force can protect constituents and advance the recommendations of the report.

Hanna Bustillo reiterated that individuals could read the report to learn more and highlighted the complexity of the topic. She further emphasized that the illicit actors on social media use a spectrum of social media platforms to evade capture.

Jamie Feld circled back to the state social awareness campaign which will serve as an important awareness tool for communicating the dangers of fentanyl to young people.

Matt Holtman spoke of the importance of peer-to-peer awareness and letting young people drive the messaging to support other young people.

### *2023 Committee Reports and Priorities*

Supporting Perinatal Substance Use Prevention Recovery and Treatment in Colorado (Supports Colorado) – by Jade Woodard and Kathryn Wells

- The committee refreshed the priority areas: (1) stigma reduction, (2) warm handoffs, (3) fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and (4) statewide policy and data.
- New plan of safe care pilot: Plan of safe care is a framework and requirement that an infant, who is perinatally exposed to substances, receive a plan of action to ensure the child is cared for and properly supported.
- The committee is interested in testing and studying best practices to identify perinatal exposure through data-collection from statewide initiatives that are already established.
- The committee's ask: a survey has been assembled to get a sense of what programs and initiatives are already in place throughout the state.

Attorney General Weiser highlighted the importance of adapting messaging across different audiences, including but not limited to: Families that have lost a loved one, families who are supporting a loved one in recovery, and individuals who have lost parents or siblings. He inquired how the committee can adapt resources to uniquely support these different audiences.

Jade Woodard asked the group what the points of entry should be to reach the broader network of families who can help mobilize these resources and plans.

Attendee recommended the methadone clinics across Colorado.

Jose Esquibel provided updates on behalf of the Consortium:

- Regarding Colorado opioid overdose data, Jose highlighted a slow-down in overdoses in comparison to previous years but emphasized the importance for continued emphasis on life saving resources, such as naloxone.
- There are 10 workgroups across the Consortium working on a variety of issues, including technical assistance and resources for regional leaders.
- The school of public health is working on increasing employment opportunities for people in recovery.
- Consortium hosted a fentanyl awareness meeting that happens quarterly. To join the meetings, contact Jose Esquibel.

- Consortium is partnered with CDPHE and Black leaders in Colorado to address the gaps in data representation for people of color. This work is ongoing, Jose addressed the resource scarcity in Black neighborhoods, and the forthcoming research from this group.
- Consortium is working on expansion of MAT services, including resource mobilization for inmates during and after their sentences.
- Consortium is sharing a survey on various legislation to gauge the group's insights on policy issues related to opioids.

Lesley Brooks provided a committee update:

- She spoke of a "groundswell" around whether the waiver to prescribe Buprenorphine should be required. She spoke of federal legislative changes that eliminated the waiver which previously acted as a roadblock for prescribing life-saving medication to those experiencing opioid dependence and addiction.
- Jose Esquibel mentioned that the CDC and CDPHE were in communication regarding Colorado's status as a national leader for prescription rates of Buprenorphine.
- Lesley Brooks acknowledged this milestone but reiterated the importance of continued emphasis on Buprenorphine prescriptions. She spoke of the previous barrier of "waiver training" that limited access to this medication.

State Epidemiology Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW) Updates:

- The SEOW is a network of multidisciplinary data experts across Colorado that measure the impacts of substance use.
- SEOW is working to expand the pool of individuals engaged with this Workgroup, with the goal of reaching new stakeholders.
- This year, SEOW is releasing its next Colorado epidemiology profile which provides a comprehensive assessment of substance abuse in the state, including prevalence across demographics.
- SEOW uses these profiles to guide local, state, and federal entities on how to understand this issue and address health inequities.
- The question and ask for the group: to weigh in on how these profiles can be used as an effective resource for information and data-sharing statewide.
- Visit [coloradoseow.org](http://coloradoseow.org) to learn more.

Jamie Feld reiterated the benefit of amplifying these data reports.

Jose Esquibel recommended notifying the Colorado Opioid Abatement Council (COAC) and Regional Opioid Abatement Councils (ROACs) about these profile reports.

Jamie Feld highlighted that county-specific data is often more valuable for local entities, and invited SEOW to consider this.

SBIRT Updates (Screening Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment)

- SBIRT is tracking HB23-1009.
- SBIRT is being implemented in student-based health centers currently.

- SBIRT has an adolescent workgroup that is working to gauge how youth providers are addressing substance use prevention and practitioners' strategies for discussing these issues with patients.
- They are looking to recruit new members for the groups that are most impacted, including identifying gaps in screening practices.

Jamie Feld spoke of the value of these programs for reaching young people and helping raise awareness.

Jose Esquibel emphasized that SBIRT has an innovative, evidence-based model that is successfully supporting youth and raising awareness for substance use prevention.

Attendee said that resources should extend to middle school and elementary school audiences as well to help curb use early and build support systems for children.

*Pew Charitable Trust and Center for Improving Value in Health Care (CIVHC)*

Presented by Jose Esquibel (Colorado Consortium) and Jane Koppelman from CIVHC.

Pew is developing measurements to determine the performance of state opioid treatment systems.

Jane K. commented on the national interest in overdose data but said that very few states are considering the benefits of medication-assisted treatment (MAT) to address opioid use disorder.

The goal of the Pew project is to "help all states have the data they need to address the opioid crisis and to encourage that the data be: publicly available, include the Medicaid population, be disaggregated by geography/demographics, and be put into action."

She highlighted the OUD "Cascade of Care," a framework for assessing the effectiveness of a state's OUD response apparatus.

Jose Esquibel spoke of a Consortium-SEOW joint data workgroup working to collect commercial and public data points over a 6-year period. He expressed his enthusiasm for the project and appreciation to SEOW and CIVHC for their partnership.

*Conclusion*

SATF adjourned.