

Illinois Opioid Crisis Response Advisory Council Meeting

April 20, 2020

MEETING MINUTES

IDHS/SUPR Director Danielle Kirby welcomed the group.

IDHS/SUPR Updates

Director Danielle Kirby gave the following updates:

- IDHS/SUPR continues to update COVID-19-related policies and guidance to meet the health, safety and treatment needs of providers and the people they serve. Dr. Sue Pickett will continue to email these updates to the Council.

Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) Updates

Jenny Epstein, Director of Strategic Opioid Initiatives gave a brief update:

- IDPH staff are all working full-time on the COVID-19 response, including Ms. Epstein.
- IDPH is working with all of its partners on COVID-19. Priority areas include: supporting clinical operations and pathways, increasing infrastructure for surge capacity, securing safe living spaces for people for people who cannot socially distance (i.e., people who are homeless), examining preventative practices in long-term care facilities, and working with the National Guard to implement testing statewide.
- Statistics on and guidance related to COVID-19 is on IDPH's website. IDPH updates this webpage daily: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19>.

Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) Updates

Dr. Maria Bruni, Senior Policy Advisor, shared the following updates:

- At the end of March, HFS worked with federal CMS to apply for a 1135 Medicaid waiver to provide emergency COVID-19 services. The waiver was approved.
- Provider notices, including guidance on telehealth and billing, and other COVID-19-related information can be found on HFS' website: <https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/Pages/coronavirus.aspx>.
- Discussion: Council members asked what "on the ground" changes SUPR, HFS and IDPH were observing in regard to OUD. Council members voiced concerns regarding reduced provider hours, increased risk of relapse, and increased overdoses. It was also noted that people with OUD are at higher risk for dying from COVID-19. Director Kirby noted that observations to date were based on anecdotal evidence. The majority of providers are staying open. Telehealth and other virtual forms of communication to help people stay connected should be explored, recognizing however that there are challenges associated with this (i.e., not all providers have capacity/capability to provide telehealth; not all patients have reliable Internet access). Ms. Epstein suggested that data on the impact of COVID-19 on fatal opioid overdoses could potentially be presented at the May Council meeting.

IDHS/Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) Updates

Dr. Sarah Pointer, Clinical Director of the Prescription Monitoring Program, gave the following updates:

- The PMP continues to work with IDPH on an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) to share opioid-related datasets.
- The PMP is working with a vendor on a pilot project to transmit overdose data into EHRs.
- Interstate data sharing is being expanded. It is now possible to view nearly 22 states data through the website.

Committee Updates

Dr. Sue Pickett, Deputy Director of Research & Evaluation at Advocates for Human Potential, Inc. gave the following Committee updates:

- Committees continue to meet, as possible. We recognize that many committee members are on the frontlines of the pandemic and we therefore have not pushed to schedule meetings.
- In keeping with SUPR guidelines, the MAT Committee has changed its name to the Medication Assisted Recovery (MAR) Committee. This Committee has been asked to address one of the Duties outlined in the Executive Order: Compile recommendations for policies to ensure that residential programs provide access to MAT (MAR) and other evidence-based treatment.
- The new Opioid Social Equity Committee will hold its first meeting on May 4th. Dr. Wilnise Jasmin has agreed to chair this committee. If you would like to join this committee, or any other committee please email Sue at spickett@ahpnet.com.

Presentation: Chicago Urban League's Letter on COVID-19 and People Who Use Drugs

Kathie Kane-Willis, Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Chicago Urban League, gave the following presentation (see attached handout).

- The Chicago Urban League spearheaded a letter to Governor Pritzker and Mayor Lightfoot highlighting the COVID-19-related needs of people with SUD and OUD. To date, the letter has been co-signed by 37 organizations. The letter stresses that people with OUD are at heightened risk of death due to COVID-19. Six recommendations are offered to address prevention and recovery support services for people with SUD during the pandemic. These include:
 - (1) Increase access to opioid agonist treatment in the community and criminal justice system.
 - (2) The State of Illinois should encourage federal removal of the buprenorphine waiver as well as methadone-dispensing restrictions for the duration of the pandemic. Provide state support in advocating for amendments to federal regulations barring office-based methadone treatment.
 - (3) Increase access to low-barrier housing for individuals with SUD.
 - (4) Encourage local jurisdictions to de-prioritize arrests for illicit drug purchasing.
 - (5) Prioritize access to overdose and infectious disease prevention services (e.g., harm reduction services), including Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) and naloxone distribution.
 - (6) Continue to release persons at risk of morbidity and mortality from jails and prisons.
- Organizations are welcome to co-sign the letter. If you are interested in signing the letter, contact Kathie at kkanewillis@chiul.org.
- Director Kirby noted that the letter helps address the COVID-19-related needs of people with OUD. She asked state agencies to share what they are doing and/or have done to address these needs.
 - SUPR has encouraged all opioid treatment programs (OTPs) to consider 14-28 day take-home medication based on the needs of their patients. SUPR guidelines for OTPs also support telehealth, including structured daily phone case management services for patients who are at risk for an opioid overdose.
 - Recognizing that services during the pandemic are particularly challenging for homeless individuals who have no safe, stable place to return to upon discharge from residential care, SUPR is allowing patients to shelter-in-place at the residential program.
 - Ms. Epstein noted that the letter has been sent to IDPH Director Ezike and the Health Equity Task Force. She noted that being able to safely isolate people in prisons who are symptomatic is a priority for the Director. She also noted that Governor Pritzker recently signed an Executive Order allowing medical furloughs for prisoners. Ms. Epstein will convene a small harm reduction

workgroup that will reach out to local health department directors regarding homeless shelters needs for PPE.

- IDPH oversees the SSP registry. SSPs are community-based and provide a range of preventive services, including testing for and linkage to treatment for infectious disease and access to and disposal of sterile syringes and injection equipment. Any governmental organization, health department, non-profit organization or individual can register as an SSP.
- Council members asked what efforts are in place in minority communities to offer safe shelter for people who are asymptomatic. It was noted that people leaving jail are only able to access services through 311, and this can delay timely receipt of services. Director Kirby shared that efforts were underway to secure hotel rooms for vulnerable populations.
- It was noted that we only have emerging data on number of people of color dying from COVID-19. This could be a topic for a future Council meeting (i.e., disparities in COVID-19 deaths among people with OUD).

New Business

- Director Kirby shared that IDHS and IDPH have been working with the Lt. Governor's office to convene the Steering Committee. The first meeting has been delayed due to COVID-19. Director Kirby will share an update on the Steering Committee at the May Council meeting.

May Council Meeting:

- The next Illinois Crisis Response Advisory Council meeting will be held on Monday, May 18, 2020 from 1:00-3:00 PM. This will be a virtual meeting. Information on how to connect to and participate in the meeting will be sent closer to the meeting date. Council meeting minutes and materials (including handouts from this meeting) can be found on the Council's website: <https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=97186>