Resources for Programs Providing Medication Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The document lists guidance and resources for in-patient and out-patient programs and facilities providing Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD). These resources are available to provide continuity of care and to help mitigate the potential surge of patients seeking in-hospital treatment. Resources are continually changing; visit the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) COVID-19 Web site for the most recent information.

Guidance for Opioid Treatment Programs

The current COVID-19 pandemic presents additional challenges to accessing and receiving treatment through an Opioid Treatment Program (OTP).

- SAMHSA released OTP Guidance, updated on March 19, 2020, to provide increased flexibility when social distancing is recommended. Guidance includes:
  - For stable patients: The state may request blanket exceptions for all stable patients in an OTP to receive 28 days of Take-Home doses of the patient's medication for opioid use disorder (OUD).
  - For patients who are less stable: The state may request up to 14 days of Take-Home medication for those patients who are less stable but who the OTP believes can safely handle this level of Take-Home medication.
- The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has published a memorandum that authorizes practitioners to be able to prescribe controlled substances to consumers using telemedicine without first conducting an in-person evaluation during this public health emergency.
  - For new patients: The DEA has partnered with SAMHSA to ensure authorized practitioners may admit and treat new patients with OUD during the public health emergency via telephone by otherwise authorized practitioners.

Reducing Transmission in OTP Facilities

There is a risk of COVID-19 transmission within OTP settings.

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided Interim Prevention and Control Recommendations for Patients with Suspected or Confirmed Coronavirus Disease in Healthcare Settings.
  - Key concepts from these recommendations include limiting how germs can enter the facility, isolating symptomatic patients, and protecting healthcare personnel.
- Additionally, the CDC has provided Interim Guidance for Healthcare Facilities in order to prepare for community transmission of COVID-19. Guidance includes:
  - Visual alerts (signs, posters) at entrances and in strategic places providing instruction on hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, and cough etiquette.
  - Ensure supplies are available for patient use (tissues, waste receptacles, alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
  - Facemasks are available for patients with respiratory symptoms.
  - Create an area for spatially separating patients with respiratory symptoms. Ideally patients would be greater than six feet apart in waiting areas.
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services released guidance on March 17, 2020, that now allows patients to be seen via live videoconferencing in their homes, without having to travel to qualifying "originating sites" for Medicare telehealth encounters, regardless of geographic location.

- o Alternatives to face-to-face triage and visits should continue to be explored; a combination of telehealth and in-person check-in appointments can be used.
- o The American Psychiatric Association has also provided an [Update on Telehealth Restrictions in Response to COVID-19](#)*.

Additional Resources

- [SAMHSA](#) has provided an array of resources for substance use treatment programs and issues:
  - o [Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) document regarding the provision of methadone and buprenorphine for the treatment of OUD in the COVID-19 emergency.
  - o [FAQs](#) from Ohio for states looking to provide further guidance on OTPs.
  - o [Disaster Planning Handbook for Behavioral Health Treatment Programs](#) can provide further guidance in creating a disaster preparedness and recovery plan for programs that provide treatment for mental illness and substance use disorders.
  - o Document on [Considerations for Outpatient Mental and Substance Use Disorder Treatment Settings.](#)
- [National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) COVID-19](#) web page provides additional resources and information.
  - o NIDA also published this [blog post](#) describing the Potential Implications for Individuals with Substance Use Disorders during the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- American Society of Addiction Medicine provided guidance on [COVID-19: Adjusting Drug Testing Protocols](#)*.

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* This is a non-federal website. Linking to a non-federal website does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. government, or any of its employees, of the information and/or products presented on that site.

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