



Virtual Opioid Task Force Meeting – Update April 18, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

First, I hope that this finds you and your loved ones well. We continue to be so impressed by the fortitude and commitment and grace with which our front line providers are working - often at great risk to themselves. I am very grateful.

Since January first of this year, the troopers assigned to this office have seen 59 overdose deaths. As we always say, this is not all of the overdose deaths in our county or our communities - only those for which our troopers were called. The data, though incomplete, is a helpful and important barometer of where we are and, as you know, helps our communities determine when to use the “surge” communications to warn communities of a sudden uptick.

Of those 60 overdoses, to date, the communities of Acton, Bedford, Billerica, Chelmsford, Newton, North Reading, Stow, Waltham, and Wilmington had 1 death each; there were two fatalities in each of Cambridge, Hudson, and Medford; 3 in each of Framingham,, Tewksbury, and Wakefield; 4 in each of Marlboro, Somerville, and Woburn; 6 in Everett; 8 in Malden, and 10 in Lowell.

I am pleased to announce that the DA will be holding a “virtual” Opioid Task Force meeting, using Zoom, on April 29th. Rather than trying to have five separate meetings, we thought we’d start with one and see what the interest is. We will be holding this virtual gathering on Wednesday, April 29, 2020 at 10am. In preparation, I’d like to ask each of you to think about whether there is something that you’ve seen during this time that has been particularly helpful in your work and that you want to share. Zoom link is at the bottom of this e-mail.

Our proposed agenda for the meeting will include a report from addiction and pain specialists at Newton Wellesley about how their practice is adjusting and what they’re seeing among their population as well as information from Phoenix programs about their virtual programming to support people in recovery.

Zoom meetings are sometimes tough to manage so I’m thinking we will try to keep the formal meeting to one hour but open up the meeting earlier to allow folks to talk and catch up - its been a long time since we have been together.

A couple of updates since last week:

COVID in Massachusetts:

As of April 17, 2020, there have been: 34,402 total confirmed cases in Massachusetts of which 7,744 have been in Middlesex. Massachusetts has seen Deaths and there have been 148,744 patients tested to date by MA State Public Health Laboratory, hospitals and commercial laboratories.



Guns, Safety, and COVID: The Veterans Administration has a [firearm storage toolkit](#) as part of its suicide prevention efforts. The [US Department of Justice](#), recognizing that for people at risk of intimate partner or other relationship violence, home may be the least safe place, has offered some information on safety.

Resources on the MDAO Webpage: The Website for the Middlesex District Attorney's Office will be updated with free resources for folks in need. Link here: <https://www.middlesexda.com/opioid-initiatives/pages/covid-19-opioid-task-force-resources>

Resources from our partners: The non-profit group *Support After a Death by Overdose* has a variety of helpful resources to share <https://sadod.org/2020/04/13/get-help-where-grief-and-covid-19-intersect/> including some thoughts about safer use during this time <https://harmreduction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID19-safer-drug-use-1.pdf>. In addition, they have started a newsletter for anyone working in or living in this space.

Every Tuesday, the *Northeast Recovery Learning Community* holds a Virtual Meet Up on Zoom from 3-4. They have asked us to spread the word for individuals interested in connecting during these potentially difficult times. The purpose of the meet up is to chat, laugh, meet new people, and build connection.

I will look forward to “seeing” many of you in our zoom meeting next month. In the interim, please send me any information you want to share and also, let me know if you want to have some time on our agenda for that meeting, to share programming or ideas with our colleagues.

Stay safe, and thank you all for your work.

Nora