



Virtual Opioid Task Force Meeting – Update October 2, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

As we mentioned last month, we will hear from our colleagues at Casa Esperanza about their culturally competent programming directed to support people in the Latinx community thru addiction and recovery. In addition, we will hear from folks from the Cambridge Health Alliance on their efforts around culturally competent programming, and finally from Mike Hugo who will talk about what is happening in his constituency: local public health departments during the pandemic. I hope you will join us and PLEASE feel free to send this and the invitation to any colleagues that you know who might be interested.

I wanted to share some [interesting research](#) with you about the connection between recovery and the prevalence of physical health disorders. Researchers, including two from the MGH Recovery Research Institute, have published a new study finding that, compared to the general U.S. population, individuals in recovery from substance use disorders experience a greater lifetime prevalence and likelihood of developing additional physical diseases including diabetes, heart disease, hepatitis C, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) than the general U.S. population. While they are careful to acknowledge that, “A survey at one point in time can't prove a causal relationship between AOD (alcohol and other drugs) problems and an increased prevalence of physical diseases. However, the results of multiple previous studies suggest a high probability that the increased prevalence of certain diseases in the National Recovery Survey participants, relative to the general population, is either directly or indirectly related to AOD problems.” The researchers and authors agree though that these results speak to the need for earlier and more sustained intervention for AOD problems, greater integration of addiction treatment and primary health care, and longitudinal research to explore the complex, dynamic relationships between AOD use and physical disease.

I also wanted to share information about the Law Enforcement, Active Duty, Emergency Responder (LEADER) program at McLean. The LEADER program at McLean Hospital provides specialized mental health and addiction services, designed specifically for men and women in uniform. I hope to ask them to join us at a future meeting - I know that the work in Everett, providing direct support and attention to the first responders in that community is so valuable and we have all benefited from hearing about the work of the Home Base program working with military families.

In our ongoing analysis and review of deaths by suicide, I wanted to call to your attention an [article about the increase in deaths by suicide](#) among youth who used a firearm. The article is focused on back-to-school and COVID and also notes that in the past decade, the firearm suicide rate among young people has increased faster than in any other age group. Today, it is at an all-time high. They point out that as students begin an unpredictable school year in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is concern that



the anxiety and loneliness already felt by many young people will continue to increase. A [study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) found that a quarter of young adults (ages 18–24) have contemplated suicide during the pandemic. In the CDC study, just over 40% of 5,470 respondents who completed surveys during June reported an adverse mental or behavioral health condition, including over 26% with what they define as symptoms of a trauma-and stressor-related disorder (TSRD) related to the pandemic. For this survey, substance use was defined as use of “alcohol, legal or illegal drugs, or prescription drugs that are taken in a way not recommended by your doctor.” Just over 13% started or increased substance use to cope with stress or emotions related to COVID-19 , and about 10% ported having seriously considered suicide in the preceding 30 days Almost three quarters (74.9%) of the respondents aged 18--24 and one half of those from 25-44 years old reported at least one adverse mental or behavioral health symptom. Suicidal ideation was more prevalent among males than among females. Hispanic respondents reported higher prevalence of symptoms of anxiety disorder or depressive disorder, COVID-19–related TSRD, increased substance use, and suicidal ideation than did non-Hispanic whites (whites) or non-Hispanic Asian (Asian) respondents. Black respondents reported increased substance use and past 30-day serious consideration of suicide in the previous 30 days more commonly than did white and Asian respondents. We continue to observe and respond to deaths b suicide in Middlesex and to work with providers’ expert in suicide prevention to determine what additional steps we can take, individually and as communities to support our residents.

I look forward to seeing you all - even if just in a little square on my computer screen - and to hearing from our presenters. Here, again, is the zoom link - again, feel free to share!

Topic: Virtual Opioid Task Force Meeting

Time: Oct 7, 2020 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Warm regards and stay safe!!

Nora J. Mann, J.D.

Community Partnerships

Office of Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan

nora.mann@massmail.state.ma.us

339-368-0495 (mobile)