

COVID-19 Intervention Actions: Providing Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder

March 19, 2020 (Updated as of 2 p.m. ET)

OVERVIEW

This document summarizes recent guidance for providing medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder during the COVID-19 outbreak. This summary was compiled by ASTHO staff at a specific point in time and will be updated periodically as new information is available.

The COVID-19 pandemic comes at a time when the United States is still grappling with the opioid epidemic. Along with concern for populations traditionally vulnerable to infectious disease, those who use substances are now [considered](#) particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 (especially if their substance use is through smoking). In order to provide continuity of care and reduce the severity of the potential intersection of these two epidemics, federal and state agencies have begun to relax restrictions around take-home medications like methadone and explore telemedicine options.

STATE AND FEDERAL POLICY ACTIONS

Significant action has already been taken at the federal level to ease restrictions on and encourage continuity of care for patients receiving medication-assisted treatment. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has issued guidance on take-home protocols, and the Drug Enforcement Agency has loosened restrictions around telehealth for MAT services.

The following are examples of states following up on these actions and, in some instances, creatively maneuvering to continue to provide uninterrupted MAT services:

- The Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addiction is [collaborating](#) with the nonprofit Overdose Lifeline to create lock boxes that provide both MAT and the anti-overdose medication naloxone during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Michigan has released [guidance for substance use disorder treatment during COVID-19](#).
- New York state issued [guidance for Opioid Treatment Programs](#).
- Ohio has released [guidance to Opioid Treatment Programs](#).
- Washington state has released [FAQs about COVID-19 and Opioid Treatment Programs](#).
- Colorado has issued [guidance for opioid treatment programs](#).
- New Jersey has issued [guidance for opioid treatment programs](#).
- California has released [guidance to help keep both, patients and providers safe during the COVID-19 National Emergency Response](#).
- Pennsylvania has suggested [Opioid Treatment Programs to review and update continuity plans](#) in preparation for additional COVID-19 cases across the state.

CONSIDERATIONS

- Remove barriers to and [promote](#) take-home medication, in line with SAMHSA's March 16 guidance.
- Ensure OTP program leadership has the contact information of the State Opioid Treatment Authority.
- Expand and promote telehealth capabilities for providing MAT, as [encouraged](#) by the DEA.
- Ensure an adequate supply of opioid treatment medications and explore the feasibility of medication delivery to patients.
- Review and consider temporary, emergency revisions to opioid treatment program (OTP) staffing requirements to balance patient access, continuity of care, and potential staff shortages due to illness.
- Ensure interoperable communications, such as systems and equipment that enable OTP staff to communicate with key partners.
- [Explore](#) alternative medication delivery systems, like lockboxes, to provide MAT.

KEY RESOURCES

- [COVID-19 and Opioid Treatment Programs](#) (PDF), by SAMHSA.
- [COVID-19 & HIPAA Bulletin Limited Waiver of HIPAA Sanctions and Penalties During a Nationwide Public Health Emergency](#) (PDF), by HHS.
- [List of resources for guidance around COVID-19 Response and Medication Assisted Treatment](#), by the American Society of Addiction Medicine.
- [COVID-19: Potential Implications for Individuals with Substance Use Disorders](#), by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.
- [Coronavirus Guidance for Patients Engaged in Substance Use Treatment](#), by the Yale Program in Addiction Medicine.
- [FAQs about COVID-19 and Opioid Treatment Programs](#), by the Wisconsin Society of Addition Medicine.
- [Disaster Planning Handbook for Behavioral Health Treatment Programs](#) (PDF), by SAMHSA.
- [Guidance on how to use telemedicine while providing Medication Assisted Treatment](#) (PDF), by DEA.

For questions, feedback, or additional information, please email preparedness@astho.org.