COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE EFFECTS ON OPIOID TREATMENT PROGRAMS

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APRIL 27, 2020
Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs)

• OTPs are essential public facilities that provide critical medication services to individuals with an Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)
• Many individuals present at an OTP daily to receive medication
• The treatment of opioid dependence with medications is governed by the Certification of Opioid Treatment Programs, 42 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), 8.12
• This regulation created a system to accredit and certify opioid treatment programs (OTPs)
• OTP patients are required to receive counseling, which can include different forms of behavioral therapy
Methadone for Opioid Dependence

- Methadone can only be prescribed/dispensed for maintenance treatment at a licensed Opioid Treatment Program (OTP)
- An OTP is also permitted to dispense buprenorphine and other FDA-approved medications
- OTPs must:
  - Be certified by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
  - Be registered as a Narcotic Treatment Program (NTP) by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)
  - Be licensed by the NJ Department of Health, Certificate of Need & Licensing (CN&L)
  - Receive accreditation by the Joint Commission, CARF, or COA
  - Provide medical services (physical evaluations, labs, urine drug screens, etc.) and substance use counseling sessions, with frequency of counseling based on phase system
The NJ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) issued guidance to OTPs on March 24, 2020:

- Take-home medication
  - Individuals deemed stable by provider can receive up to 28 days of take-home medication.
  - Individuals deemed less stable by provider can receive up to 14 days of take-home medication.

- Counseling
  - Telehealth options for continued prescribing and/or counseling in times of emergency or disaster should be utilized to the extent possible, maintaining standards for patient confidentiality.
  - In order to reduce patient attendance and volume at OTPs, group counseling should be curtailed and in-person individual and other meetings should be curtailed or provided by way of telehealth.
Strategies to Assist OTPs in Response to COVID-19

- Distribution of naloxone
  - Provision of naloxone kits to each licensed OTP. Number of naloxone kits based on agency census.

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - Provision of a small supply of N95 masks and sterile gloves for licensed OTPs.

- Guidance documents
  - The NJ Department of Human Services (DHS) and DMHAS issued several guidance documents for providers in effort to assist them in ensuring quality programming in a safe and effective way:
Resources

- NJ Department of Health
  www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/ncov.shtml
- 24-Hour COVID-19 Hotline: 1-800-222-1222 (in-state) or (800) 962-1253 (out-of-state)
- Contact Information for local health departments in NJ:
  http://localhealth.nj.gov
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention:
  www.cdc.gov/COVID19
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
  https://www.samhsa.gov/coronavirus
- NJ Board of Pharmacy
  https://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/phar