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County Executive Marc Elrich
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County Executive Marc Elrich:

It is my privilege to again chair the Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council and to present our priorities for the year. Members identified focus areas aligned with our charge from the Montgomery County Charter, primarily prevention, advice, and outreach. Within those areas, members identified goals and strategies to utilize our collective experiences and expertise to reduce substance use, related illnesses and deaths.

Our primary focus this year is stigma reduction, detailed below, and to continue to quantify the need for substance use disorder treatment and recovery options for Montgomery County youth, and to support efforts to ensure those resources meet the need.

Prevention (includes harm reduction):

- Reduce substance use disorder stigma throughout the county, guided by Shatterproof's [Change Your Language](#), Addiction Language Guide, [NIDA's Words Matter](#), and the American Psychological Association's [APA Writing Guide - Disabilities](#) to include the charter language, agency/department/BCC names, policy documents, and all communications. Continue to work with Shatterproof to measure and combat stigma in various professions such as prescribers and pharmacists, the legal community including law enforcement and courts, treatment, and education.
- Continue to support and collaborate with the Prevention Alliance's Youth Ambassador Program in partnership with MCPS, school based wellbeing teams, and Montgomery Goes Purple.
- Promote screening for substance use in pre-adolescents and teens by pediatricians & primary doctors beginning at age 9, in accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation. Encourage physicians to prescribe naloxone in tandem with every opioid prescription, and to avoid prescribing opioids to anyone under 18.
- Monitor the implementation of [Handle With Care](#) in partnership with MCPS, MCPD and other law enforcement agencies, as the program is implemented countywide. Explore a statewide bill for HWC to provide continuity and ease of reporting across agencies, including Maryland State Police, and include trauma informed training for first responders and school staff to ensure appropriate care for identified students.
- Increase public awareness and education on acute cannabis overdose toxicity, edibles, "rainbow fentanyl", "Delta 8", flavored vapes and tobacco products, and other substances targeted at or attractive to youth.

Treatment and Recovery:

- Expand harm reduction efforts including fentanyl test strip distribution, and syringe exchange with community-based wraparound services, and train business owners and staff to administer naloxone, and request replacements by EMS units who respond to the scene of an overdose.

- Elevate the use of Peer Recovery Specialists and Family Support Specialists, including with MCPS students and families. Expand workforce development efforts to create a pipeline for recruitment, hiring, promotion, and mentoring for leadership of peers and professionals from diverse racial, ethnic, and other underrepresented communities in the field of substance use services in Montgomery County.
- Support efforts to recruit a nurse practitioner with a background in substance use treatment to work at the detention center so that Medication Assisted Recovery can be initiated at the facility.
- Identify pathways to provide Narcan training and supplies to the families of students who experience an overdose or are otherwise confirmed to be misusing opioids, and a partner to deliver diversion programs like SUPRE to students where indicated.
- Improve access to, and acceptance of Medication Assisted Recovery programs in all settings.
- Support the construction of the Restoration Center that will stabilize persons in crisis (e.g., detox) and provide diversion from jails and emergency rooms.
- Expand Montgomery Goes Purple initiative to include more year-round campaigns with additional County partners, municipalities, organizations, and businesses, and expand education and prevention efforts within MCPS.

Legislative:

- Support enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act in the county, state and nationally, including elimination of Non Quantitative Treatment Limitations (NQTLs) and inadequate networks. Support including implementation and funding of the Consumer Health Access Program (CHAP), currently under study by order of the state legislature, to provide consumers one-stop, no wrong door access to advocates to help obtain insurance and treatment and ensure that mental health and substance use disorders are covered by insurers in accordance with federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act and other applicable laws.
- Expand the Screening and Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder in Correctional Settings to include state prisons.
- Improve the effectiveness of the annual legislative retreat through collaboration with agencies and BCCs to identify and track legislation more efficiently and timely.

AODAAC appreciates the opportunity to share and discuss the priorities members have identified. We have forged a strong collaboration with the Mental Health Advisory Committee and we welcome additional collaborations with other county boards, committees, and commissions.

Sincerely,



Laura Mitchell, M.B.A. (She/Her)

AODAAC Chair