

**Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council FY20 Priorities
Health and Human Services Committee Meeting – October 17, 2019**

1. *To Examine How Vaping and E-Cigarettes are Addressed in the County and Provide Recommendations to the County Executive and County Council to Improve the Situation*

Research shows that childhood and early adolescence is a time when people are most likely to begin abusing drugs – including tobacco, alcohol, and illegal and prescription drugs. One issue that AODAAC members were specifically concerned about was the increase of vaping and e-cigarettes among youth. Nationally, there has been a sharp spike in vaping and the use of e-cigarettes in middle and high schools across the country. From 2011 to 2015, e-cigarette use by high school students increased by 900%. And then, from 2017 to 2018, the number of high school students reporting that they used e-cigarettes during the past year nearly doubled. As of 2018, more than 3.6 million U.S. youth report using e-cigarettes in the previous 30 days. This includes 1 in 5 high school students and 1 in 20 middle school students. Unfortunately, there is very little data about usage rates in the County itself.

Moreover, AODAAC has heard of problems that schools and other places that support adolescents face after finding e-cigarettes. For example, AODAAC has heard reports that the police will not remove the e-cigarettes which leaves teachers and administrators with the problem of disposing of these products safely and without risking recovery by youth. Therefore, this year AODAAC will examine what data is available within the County and arrange meetings to learn more about this issue with representatives from the Montgomery County Police Department, the Montgomery County Public Schools, and other affected and concerned individuals. Our goal will be to provide recommendations to the County Executive and the County Council on how to best address and improve this situation within the County.

2. *To Continue to Advocate for: a) Adequate Funding for Alcohol and Drug Prevention and Treatment Programs; and, b) Evidence-Based Laws Regulating Alcohol and Drugs in the County and the State*

The consequences of alcohol and drug use and abuse are becoming increasingly lethal. In 2018, there were 2,406 drug- and alcohol-related intoxication deaths in Maryland. This is the ninth year in a row that intoxication deaths have increased, and, represents a 5% increase over the number of deaths in 2017. Of these deaths, 89 occurred in Montgomery County which is 58 percent more deaths than occurred here in 2007. However, for the first time in eight years, the number of deaths has finally started to decrease and is down from 116 deaths last year. Together, prescription opioids and alcohol were responsible for over one-third of all drug- and alcohol-related intoxication deaths in the County during 2018 (18 percent and 21 percent, respectively). However, 80 percent of alcohol-related deaths occurred in combination with opioids.

Each year, the County spends millions of dollars on alcohol and drug prevention programs and alcohol and drug treatment programs; sadly, this is not enough. Prevention of alcohol and drug abuse is extremely important; research shows that \$1 spent on prevention can result in roughly \$10 in long-term savings. However, for many years, there has been only one person responsible for coordinating and executing drug and alcohol prevention programs for the entire county: one person is not enough. Substance use disorder treatment also saves money, with research showing for every \$1 spent it saves \$7. Although the County has not cut spending for treatment programming to the same extent as other programs over the past decade, a failure to adequately fund these treatment programs can have serious consequences. These include numerous financial, physical, and emotional costs on individuals with substance use disorders, their families, and the County as a whole.

Therefore, this year, AODAAC intends to continue to push for greater awareness of the inadequacy of the current level of funding for alcohol and drug treatment and prevention in the county, and thus also advocate for more funding for these programs. Additionally, AODAAC will also advocate for stronger and more comprehensive evidence-based laws regulating alcohol and drugs in the County and the State.