

1. Continuation of Activities to Educate County Residents on the Harms of Substance Misuse

a. Protecting Youth from Social and Behavioral Risks Due to COVID Isolation. COVID has brought unprecedented disruptions to daily life and many social changes, including significant impacts on our youth. These include closure of schools, restriction of after school activities such as sports and clubs, and enforced social distancing and isolation from peers. Scientific reviews of the effects of social isolation and loneliness have shown that “Children and adolescents are probably more likely to experience high rates of depression and probably anxiety during and after enforced isolation ends.” Loades, *J Am Acad Child Adol Psych*, 2020. Isolated youth may be vulnerable to greater drug, alcohol, and tobacco access; as well as to other environmental dangers such as unsecured weapons and unsupervised use of risky online sites when parents are working or when supervision is otherwise unavailable.

AODAAC, the Montgomery County Parent-Teacher Association, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving have collaborated to design a virtual prevention education program. It will inform parents about the added risks to youth during the COVID period. “Protect Your Family: Keep them Safe at Home,” is a brief and engaging presentation to raise parental awareness of major threats to teens and tweens who may spend hours home alone. The information enables parents to initiate meaningful conversations to gain insight into their children’s feelings and understand the ways they may need additional support. Each of the potential risks can be explored further via the vetted and authoritative additional information sources provided.

b. A Mini-Series to Educate the General Public on Substance Use is in the early planning stage. This learning series is envisioned as approximately 4 presentations planned for Spring 2021 addressing the addiction cycle, stigma, major classes of misused substances and their behavioral and physical effects, the value of early prevention interventions for youth at risk, and treatment models and delivery systems.

c. Identification of Improvements to Enhance Educational Value of the County-Hosted AODAAC website. A new AODAAC committee has been formed to review the site and to recommend feasible changes. The purpose of the review is to determine ways to enhance the content, audience reach, and format of the website to provide timely educational materials on substance misuse to county residents. Featured content would include fact sheets, county statistics, news features, and upcoming events. The information posted will be materials produced by vetted and authoritative groups.

2. Continuation of Advocacy for Legislation Related to Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Public Policy

Given the importance of having a voice in legislation that can affect the county’s ability to support evidence-based actions around prevention and treatment in the county, AODAAC will continue its tradition of legislative advocacy. During the past several years, AODAAC has tracked pending legislation at the state and county levels related to substance use. A yearly Legislative Retreat acquaints members with the processes and standards for preparing testimony and to review relevant proposed legislation. Last year, AODAAC members reviewed pending bills to identify several of highest priority and prepared both written and oral testimony to advocate for or against bills. After approval by the county, testimony is forwarded to the relevant legislative bodies and individual members may volunteer to present testimony orally.

3. Partnerships Development In addition to the two top priorities described above, AODAAC is also continuing to actively pursue partnerships with other BBCs—as well as outside organizations—around topics such as suicide prevention and tobacco control.