April 2020

As Ohio faces the challenges of COVID-19, the importance of maintaining the behavioral health care continuum of care has been a primary focus. For prevention services, challenges have arisen with the closing of schools, cancellation of faith-based services, and the shutdown of an extensive network of community-based congregate settings where prevention has traditionally taken place. The question has arisen: how can we do prevention without groups?

This communication is meant to help address the need for prevention services to help individuals, families, and communities during this stressful time. We have included a list of prevention strategies aimed at bringing effective resources to community populations. This is a time to look at creative ways to use the prevention workforce as a “force” for ensuring that people across the lifespan feel supported and have quality information on resiliency, suicide prevention, and about the many ways they can stay healthy mentally and physically during intense pressure.

As prevention providers work to offer vital services in new ways, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (OhioMHAS) urges ADAMH Boards to continue regular, consistent funding of prevention service programs and agencies to ensure a steady cash flow for sustainability.

For those Boards and service providers of grant-funded prevention services, a few notes:

- Budget revisions can be entered in GFMS at any time. We urge providers to consider how best to fulfill deliverables and use grant funds as intended.
- We will have a flexible carryover process. More information will be available soon.
- Disbursements through GFMS will continue as usual.
- Release of the Grants Information and Funding Announcement (GIFA) document will be sent as soon as details are finalized.
- Grant renewals could be delayed, but this will be determined later.
- The federal government is considering no-cost extensions to federal grants, but no decision has yet been made.

Many prevention professionals have experience in other fields such as social work, education, health care, business, etc. They can — and should — be an invaluable resource during this challenging time. Preventionists work in many focus areas, including mental health promotion, suicide prevention, problem gambling, and substance use disorder. The following are some nontraditional ideas to continue critical prevention and resilience work and to assist organizations like ADAMHS Boards, Educational Service Centers, and other community organizations in their work.

**Prevention Strategies:**

**Information Dissemination**
- Develop and share social media messaging for organizations that provides tips and resources to support individuals and families. Visit [mha.ohio.gov/coronavirus](http://mha.ohio.gov/coronavirus) to access sharable social media content.
- Offer educational opportunities via digital platforms.
- Provide activities and ideas for parents to build protective factors while they work/play with kids who are at home. For tips to share with families on engaging children in healthy activities at home, visit [coronavirus.ohio.gov](http://coronavirus.ohio.gov) (Children and Families) or [mha.ohio.gov/coronavirus](http://mha.ohio.gov/coronavirus) (Families, Children, and Adults).
- Distribute prevention information to food pantries and crisis centers (i.e. stay-at-home resources, Crisis Text Line promotional materials).
- Partner with schools for delivering meals or other needs they may have; use these opportunities to share prevention information for children and families. Consider partnering with your local public children services association to identify signs of abuse or neglect during this process.
- Help with local meal delivery services (e.g. Meals on Wheels) and offer engagement and encouragement to the
homebound along with mental health messaging.

• Explore potential partnerships with grocery and home improvement stores for delivering prevention messaging and resources.

**Education**

• Continue prevention education efforts utilizing technology (Zoom, Facebook, Skype, etc.). A lot of prevention work can be accomplished using technology from home.
• Host Facebook or Instagram live events to provide prevention education.

**Alternatives**

• Facilitate organized online group activities for community coalitions, youth-led, adult leadership, faith communities, senior groups, and others.

**Environmental**

• Develop and share social media messaging for organizations that provides tips and resources to support individuals and families: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram.
• Work on school and community policy development.

**Community-based Process**

• Facilitate organized online group activities and meetings for community coalitions, youth-led, adult leadership, faith communities, senior groups, and others.
• Promote drug take-back events, as people are home and may be cleaning cabinets to pass the time.
• Develop and design documents in teams for community and school prevention work.
• Assist school administrators with self-assessment and planning processes for K-12.
• Work with prevention agencies, coalitions, faith groups, etc., to develop a crisis communication and outreach plan, engage in strategic planning, or other long-range efforts.

**Problem Identification and Referral**

• Work at local crisis lines to help with an increase in calls.
• Identify potential mechanisms to assist with developing early identification and referral procedures.
• Integrate screening tools for suicide prevention, problem gambling/gaming, or trauma exposure.

**Continuing Education**

• Complete eBased Academy courses to increase skills and level-up in credentials.
• Watch recorded webinars from SAMHSA, PTTC, NIDA, CDC, etc.
• Host/participate in trainings via Facebook or Instagram live events, i.e. QPR training.

**Helpful Resources**

• [https://coronavirus.ohio.gov](https://coronavirus.ohio.gov)
• [https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.aspx)
• [https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/preschool/nutrition-fitness/Pages/Motor-Activity-and-Self-Play.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/preschool/nutrition-fitness/Pages/Motor-Activity-and-Self-Play.aspx)
• [https://youthmoveohio.com/](https://youthmoveohio.com/)
• [https://www.facebook.com/events/209967643683561/](https://www.facebook.com/events/209967643683561/)
• [https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html](https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html)
• [https://mha.ohio.gov/Portals/0/assets/HealthProfessionals/About%20MH%20and%20Addiction%20Treatment/Coronavirus/Top10Tips.pdf](https://mha.ohio.gov/Portals/0/assets/HealthProfessionals/About%20MH%20and%20Addiction%20Treatment/Coronavirus/Top10Tips.pdf)