

## **Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention**

### **Benzodiazepine Action Work Group Meeting Minutes**

October 4, 2022 via Zoom

#### **Present:**

Co-chairs: Alexis Ritvo, MD, D.E. Foster

Lisa Gemmill, Christina Dalpiaz, Barbara Connolly, Valsa Madhava, MD, Abby Anderson, MD, Trina Faatz, Anita Kumar, MD, John Staight, Alana Cooper, Christy Huff, MD, Terri Schreiber, Nicole Lamberson

Consortium: Jose Esquibel, Gina Olberding, Shayna Micucci, Jen Place, Hilary Bryant, Jessica Eaddy, Kristin Carpenter, Jennifer Mackender, Rosemarie MacDowell

Co-Chair D.E. Foster called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

#### **Approval of Minutes:**

A motion was made to approve the August 2022 meeting minutes. Motion approved.

#### **Consortium 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting & 5<sup>th</sup> Education Symposium:**

Gina Olberding reviewed plans for the 10<sup>th</sup> Consortium Annual Meeting scheduled for Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. The virtual meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. with Concurrent Sessions that will include the following topics: Advancing Colorado's Peer Support Professional Workforce, The Colorado Naloxone Project, Contingency Management, Fentanyl Public Awareness Campaigns, PDMP Training, and the Benzodiazepine Action Work Group's session addressing advocacy, provider education, and peer support to decrease harms by prescription benzodiazepines. Registration is available online: <https://corxconsortium.org/2022-annual-meeting/>

On October 28<sup>th</sup>, the in-person Education Symposium will feature author and journalist Maia Szalavitz as guest speaker, followed by a Q&A. The event will be held in the Anschutz Health Sciences building and will include dinner. There is no charge for participation. Registration is available online: <https://corxconsortium.org/2022-symposium/>

Jose suggested that work group members let their respective contacts know about the annual meeting and concurrent session related to benzodiazepines.

#### **Peer Support Training:**

The subcommittee is now working on phase two of this project, which will include a video and training manual. A pilot training session is planned for November 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> for approximately 12 participants. D.E. Foster and Dr. Christy Huff will be teaching both sessions. There is no charge to attend. Future training will include COPA certification. Work group members were asked to share information about the training with peer support specialists and others who may have an interest in attending.

Anyone wishing to become a peer specialist in Colorado must be licensed through COPA after taking the required training. Insurance coverage for services vary depending upon the location. Each state has different licensing requirements.

Requirements in Colorado for Peer and Family Specialist Certification:  
<https://coprovidersassociation.org/certifications/peer-family-specialist-certification/>

The COPA manual covers all the requirements for becoming a peer certified specialist.

Work group members discussed professionalization of the peer support field. Jose Esquibel mentioned upcoming BHA funding that will support advancement of the Colorado peer support workforce.

### **Steering Committee/Sub-Groups:**

Alexis Ritvo provided a brief history of the Consortium's collective impact model, including the staff and work group structure. Both Alexis and D suggested the work group establish sub-groups to focus on specific projects, similar to the sub-groups spearheading the peer support training, the provider education training lunch and learn sessions and recordings, and legislative advocacy.

To optimize participation, the work group also discussed strategic planning and the possibility of holding a shorter general work group meeting followed by sub-group meetings. Work group members could also provide presentations or collaborate with other Consortium work groups.

### **Comments:**

Trina Faatz said monthly meetings can be difficult, but expressed that people might drop out if meetings were shorter. She suggested an hour and a half meeting every other month.

D said the regular meeting would still focus on updates, but would then break out into sub-groups.

José said he is not aware of a lot of legislative activity at present; however, the Consortium will continue monitoring legislation. He suggested it would be important for the work group to think about policies that would help advance any activity related to benzodiazepines, including examples from other states. Recommendations could be made to the Study Committee on Opioids and Other Substance Use Disorders meeting next summer.

Alexis suggested there is an opportunity for the work group to make sure prescribers are better educated about prescribing and available resources.

Barbara Connolly asked for additional information regarding legislative action and how it might be applied in other states. Alexis referred to the substance use disorder bill in Colorado that included safer prescribing of benzodiazepines and prescriber education requirements.

### **Partner Organization Updates:**

The FDA funding announcement for a benzodiazepine deprescribing guideline is still pending. FDA RFA: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-FD-22-027.html>

RFA from Deprescribing Network for Pilot Studies That Use Complementary and Integrative Health Methods to Support Deprescribing of Benzodiazepine Receptor Agonists:  
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-FD-22-027.html>

Funding for the Alliance benzodiazepine survey research paper is moving forward.

Christy Huff is the lead author of another paper that was just resubmitted. Other papers are pending. Christy recently gave a presentation at a California Society of Addiction Medicine meeting. A CME recording is available.

Barbara Connolly reported for Benzo Warriors: Their group has established resources for caregivers. They are in the process of developing community presentations and are open to suggestions for topics.

Valsa Madhava gave a presentation to approximately 200 physicians, including naturopathic and medical doctors. She has shared her slides with Bernie Silvernail and Christy Huff. Dr. Madhava may be forming a small group comprised of some of the attendees.

D said he is updating his [www.easinganxiety.com](http://www.easinganxiety.com) website and will be launching his membership portal.

**Adjournment/Next Meeting:**

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 1, 2022 from noon to 1 p.m.

Attachments: Work group roster