

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

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

November 1, 2022 via Zoom

#### **Present:**

D.E. Foster, Co-chair

Ginger Ross, Choices Training

Valsa Madhava, MD, John Staight, Michael Bohan, MD, Bernard Silvernail, Christy Huff, MD, Terri Schreiber, Trina Faatz, Mila Long

Consortium: Jose Esquibel, Gina Olberding, Shayna Micucci, Hilary Bryant, Jessica Eaddy, Lindsey Simbeye, Rosemarie MacDowell

Co-Chair D.E. Foster called the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m.

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

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

#### **Consortium Annual Meeting:**

D reviewed the benzodiazepine concurrent session held at the beginning of the Consortium annual meeting. The session primarily focused on peer support training and identifying and defining Benzodiazepine-Induced Neurological Dysfunction (BIND), the research behind it, and the advocacy promoting its acceptance. Recent successes from the Benzodiazepine Action Work Group (BAWG), including the provider education lunch and learn sessions in May of this year, were also presented. The session was followed by a Q&A.

#### **Comments:**

Jose Esquibel said the concurrent sessions were very well attended. He briefly described the peer workforce session, the \$5.9 million in funding to increase the workforce and certifications, and the possibilities related to peers working in benzodiazepine-related areas. He suggested a meeting before the end of November to further discuss recommendations for the BHA strategic plan.

Trina Faatz mentioned that she was only able to join the peer workforce session at the very end and that it would have been beneficial to be able to attend more than one session.

Recordings of each session will be available on the Consortium website.

Gina Olberding facilitated the Colorado Naloxone concurrent session and mentioned the new Moms initiative within hospital labor and delivery units. This initiative supports new mothers struggling with substance use disorders.

Bernard Silvernail asked if there was any mention of naloxone use for benzodiazepine withdrawal. Jose said there was a recent paper regarding this subject that he will try to locate.

Shayna Micucci mentioned the upcoming behavioral health provider convening on November 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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

A sub-group has been established to manage the pilot training courses. Training courses are scheduled in December. The courses are full. There is no charge to attend. Future courses may involve a cost in order to generate revenue and become self-sustaining. Jose mentioned scholarships for participants. Sub-group members include D, Christy Huff, and Ginger Ross. The sub-group certification team includes Terri Schreiber and Trina Faatz. Nicole Lamberson is responsible for video production. A video on the science of benzodiazepines is currently being produced. Others in the sub-group are Barbara Connelly, Lisa Gemmill.

Terri Schreiber asked if Cristen Bates would be a good contact at HCPF regarding Medicaid billing. Jose asked if Terri could send him additional information so that he could send a message to Cristen.

John Staight asked about how one can successfully become a peer support specialist in communities where the medical community still refuses to admit that benzodiazepine overprescribing is a problem. He also mentioned the importance of legislation pertaining to mandatory provider education. Terri Schreiber agreed that this is a very important issue that should be addressed by the sub-group.

Jose Esquibel said it would be important to work with and train medical providers regarding the issues and to identify states with medical models of practices that are incorporating peers.

Shayna Micucci said that the Provider Education Work Group has been receiving education requests. Alexis Ritvo just did a presentation for the Behavioral Health Treatment Center. A number of benzodiazepine-focused education modules will be available some time between January and June 2023 (including CMEs).

Bernie Silvernail said the Alliance website has tools available to assist with approaching and speaking with providers: <https://benzoreform.org/pamphlet-1/>

D emphasized the importance of patients speaking to their providers to help change provider opinions. He mentioned three primary care providers he has worked with over the past ten years that eventually changed their prescribing practices.

### **Sub-group Proposal:**

The work group is exploring setting up a sub-group devoted to research. Bernie Silvernail is interested in participating and mentioned the Alliance is currently writing three papers and researching others. Christy Huff and Nicole Lamberson are working on a survey that will include the top ten research questions pertaining to reducing and discontinuing psychiatric medications.

Jose Esquibel said the BHA is in the process of creating a strategic plan and is seeking recent studies or data demonstrating the efficacy of peer support. He suggested a brief meeting to discuss information that could be provided to the BHA. D asked Shayna to schedule a meeting including Bernie, Lisa Gemmill, Christy Huff, and Barbara Connelly. Others interested in becoming involved were asked to email Shayna Micucci directly: [Shayna.micucci@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:Shayna.micucci@cuanschutz.edu)

Bernie has maintained close contact with Donovan Maust, MD, one of the premier epidemiologists in the Pennsylvania area who has published extensively. Bernie provided Dr. Maust with a list of studies. Dr. Maust will be publishing a study next year that addresses benzodiazepines and suicide.

Medicating Distress: Benzodiazepine Use in the US (Donovan Maust, MD, MS):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6qU-88yTl0>

### **Partner Organization Updates:**

Bernie reported that the Alliance is preparing another FDA submittal pertaining to a safe use grant proposal. The submittal includes information gleaned from recommendations that were included in recent Colorado legislation. They also submitted a proposal for an evidentiary review on prescription guidelines for benzodiazepines to the NIH Agency for Healthcare Research Quality.

Christy Huff said she is working on the peer support pilot and a survey related to discontinuing psychiatric medications.

D Foster just completed a two-part series podcast on his personal experience with benzodiazepines and foot surgery. He also recently interviewed Dr. Anna Lembke

<https://www.annalembke.com/>

### **Adjournment/Next Meeting:**

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m. There will not be a meeting in December. The next meeting will be held in January 2023.

Attachments: Work group roster