

Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

Public Awareness Work Group Meeting Minutes

February 19, 2025 via Zoom

Present:

Kent MacLennan, Co-chair
Aminta Bhutani, DEA
Kelsey Warren, Broomfield Public Health
Robyn Steuer, Colorado Department of Law
Karina Schorr, Eagle County Opioid Abatement Council
Kim Gonzales, L.A. Health
Betsy Craft, Drug Policy Alliance
Melissa McConnell, Denver Recovery Group
Shadia Lemus, Behavioral Health Administration
Paula Buser, Fremont County
Arapahoe County: Carl Anderson, Elicia Chacon
Consortium: Jose Esquibel, Gina Olberding, Hilary Bryant, Jessica Eaddy, Shayna Micucci,
Michael Davidson, Eric Barker, Kristin Carpenter, Rosemarie MacDowell

Absent: See attached list.

Kent MacLennan, work group co-chair, called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made to approve the November 2024 work group meeting minutes. Motion approved.

Presentation - Recovery Cards Project (Shadia Lemus):

BHA created the Recovery Cards Project in collaboration with the Lift the Label campaign to bring attention to the importance of recovery from substance use disorders. The project works with over 20 artists to develop greeting cards that celebrate recovery. BHA has distributed more than 150,000 free recovery cards since September 2019. Shadia is the BHA marketing supervisor and oversees BHA campaigns. Presentation summary:

There are more than 40 unique that are distributed without cost and intended to provide encouragement to those in recovery. Ten free cards can be ordered on the website. A digital version is available for orders outside of Colorado. A request for up to 150 free cards can be submitted with a free Lift the Label monthly newsletter subscription.

BHA conducts outreach events, assisted by volunteers, during the year to promote and distribute cards to individuals in recovery. A recent collaboration with the Hard Beauty organization distributed over 700 cards with the Hard Beauty branding. Some cards were delivered to the Denver Women's Correctional facility. A commemorative set of cards is planned in conjunction with the nation's 250th anniversary and Colorado's 150th anniversary.

Since the project is federally funded through SAMHSA, the BHA is monitoring the ongoing effects of federal funding transitions.

Website (English & Spanish): <https://www.recoverycardsproject.com/>

Overview of the Consortium and Role in the State (Hilary Bryant):

The Consortium was founded by former Governor Hickenlooper in 2013 in response to the opioid crisis. Hilary reviewed the state-funded Consortium structure within the University of Colorado and the establishment of the working groups tasked with addressing various aspects of the opioid crisis. Rob Valuck was named the Consortium's Director.

Campaign Overviews (Hilary Bryant & Ken MacLennan):

The Attorney General's office established 19 Regional Opioid Abatement Councils to determine the distribution of opioid settlement funds throughout the state. Regional councils are working on public health campaigns as well as recovery housing and treatment centers.

Fentanyl Awareness Campaign: The Fentanyl Accountability Act mandated the creation of a fentanyl awareness campaign. Heather Link-Bergman, work group co-chair, is managing the campaign. The campaign included a large study conducted by Cactus Advertising. One of the findings in the study showed that a bystander was present during 55% of overdose deaths, and 68% of those bystanders provided no response. One of the campaign's calls to action is to reduce bystander inaction and provide instruction on what to do during an overdose. Campaign materials will be produced in both English and Spanish. It is expected the campaign will be launched in June.

Recovery Work Group Co-chair, Betsy Craft, leads the campaign advisory committee, which includes other individuals with living and lived experience as well as statewide peer support specialists.

<https://corxconsortium.org/colorado-launches-keep-the-party-safe/>

Connect Effect Campaign: Rise Above Colorado's mission is to support and empower youth to make healthy choices. The Connect Effect, a project of the Opioid Response Unit in the Colorado Department of Law, is a campaign that includes evidence-based strategies for changing and improving the use of substances through positive social norming. The campaign targets youth from ages 10 to 14, their parents, and other trusted adults. Kent previewed some of the campaign ads and results. Campaign messaging includes social media (Instagram, Snapchat, and Tik Tok). The campaign has established partnerships with local communities and regional opioid councils. After only six months after the campaign launch, a survey indicated that 40% of teens were aware of the campaign and had seen the campaign messaging.

<https://www.connecteffectco.org/>

Comments:

Robyn Steuer, Colorado Department of Law: The department is very pleased with the campaign outcomes and maximization of funding.

Michael Davidson: One of the campaign strengths is the resource for parents.

Gina Olberding: There has been a decrease in overdose deaths among youth in Colorado. Public awareness campaigns and naloxone distribution can make an impact.

Hilary Bryant: Regional Opioid Councils and other organizations are using campaign materials in their public awareness ads.

Keep the Party Safe and TakeMedsSeriously Campaigns: Hilary briefly updated meeting participants about both the Keep the Party Safe and TakeMedsSeriously campaigns.

The Keep the Party Safe campaign partnered with music artists and universities and participated in a number of media interviews. 2025 plans include two community events per month to share messaging and participate in naloxone distribution. Campaign materials (posters, buttons, stickers, fact sheets) are available to community partners at no charge. Materials can be ordered on the website.

The TakeMedsSeriously campaign is a collaboration between the Consortium and SE2. It focuses on medication safe use, storage, and disposal. A segment of the campaign addresses the senior community. The TakeMedsSeriously website is currently being updated to make it more user friendly.

Comments:

Kelsey Warren: Broomfield Health has utilized the campaign materials and the recovery cards. The health department disseminates a lot of information to the community, including information related to reproductive health, vaccines, environmental health. She asked about the best way to disseminate information, given that the volume of material could present a barrier. Many of the local organizations depend on public health for advice and expertise as a trusted source of information and services like vaccine clinics.

Michael Davidson: Smaller public health departments may be tasked with covering a wider variety of public health matters, whereas the larger departments may have specific units within the department addressing specific things.

Elicia Chacon: Arapahoe County Public Health's harm reduction program addresses specific substance use issues such as naloxone. Campaign materials have been very useful.

Karina Schorr: The mountain communities (Eagle, Garfield, and Summit counties) have distributed a lot of Keep the Party Safe campaign materials. The region's Opioid Abatement Council has also started an anti-stigma and education campaign.

Karina and Hilary will discuss cooperative efforts further offline.

Campaign Messaging Gaps:

Kelsey Warren: Two major gaps exist (and also exist in Boulder and Adams counties). One of the gaps relates to use of substances and the other concerns a focus on mental health. Her public health department would like to do a campaign related to alcohol and another for youth mental health. They were planning to use the CDC drink less campaign.

<https://www.cdc.gov/drink-less-be-your-best/index.html>

Karina Schorr: Another Summit County campaign is focusing on substance use and alcohol. They have also been considering a toolkit that other organizations could utilize.

Kelsey would be interested in learning more about the toolkit.

Jose Esquibel: A small committee, including people from the School of Public Health and CDPHE, is looking into raising awareness about alcohol use and addressing alcohol policy. Dr. Ned Calonge, with the University of Colorado School of Medicine, serves on the committee. Jose said he felt there would be an effort in the next several years to bring more attention to alcohol use. The National Academy of Sciences recently issued a literature review on the health impacts of alcohol use:

<https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2024/12/new-report-reviews-evidence-on-moderate-alcohol-consumption-and-health-impacts>

Jose also mentioned an app he had heard about, which is supposed to be designed to help people with alcohol: <https://www.reframeapp.com/>

Kent said that while the Consortium is focused on prescription drug and opioids, public awareness efforts are intended to remain broad and cross over into multiple substances, including alcohol.

Robyn Steuer reminded meeting participants that the opioid settlement funds through the Department of Law are not applicable to alcohol education and outreach.

Legislation (Jose Esquibel):

The SB 25-044 Synthetic Opiates Criminal Penalties bill would have increased criminal penalties by eliminating the misdemeanor charge. The bill did not pass, but an effort may be pending to pursue this via ballot initiative in November. Laws intended for drug dealers often end up affecting people who are just struggling with addiction.

Adjournment/Next Meeting:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m. In order to encourage participation, the 2025 Public Awareness Work Group is meeting quarterly instead of bi-monthly. The next work group meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 21, 2025 from 12 to 1:30 p.m.

Attachments: Work group roster