

## Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

### Benzodiazepine Action Work Group Meeting Minutes

March 1, 2022 via Zoom

#### **Present:**

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

J.C. Curle, Michael Bohan, MD, Christy Huff, Bernard Silvernail, Terri Schreiber, Valsa Madhava, MD, Peter Eliasberg, Lisa Gemmill, Rachael Martin, Barbara Connolly, Christopher Schultz, MD, Nicole Lamberson, Duke Rumely, Sonja Bjurstrom, Gail Dawson

Consortium: Jose Esquibel, Gina Olberding, Susanna Cooper, Jen Place, Jessica Eaddy, Rosemarie MacDowell

**Absent:** See attached list.

Co-Chair Alexis Ritvo called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

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

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

#### **Peer Support Program Update:**

Alexis reported that funding was received from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to create a peer support program for individuals harmed by benzodiazepines. Work group members D.E. Foster, Christy Huff, Terri Schreiber, and Trina Faatz took part in peer recovery training provided by Choices Training. Once the program is established, it may also be offered in other states.

#### **Prescriber Education Update:**

Alexis spoke about plans for future provider education lunch and learn sessions that will focus on benzodiazepine safe prescribing and tapering as well as peer support. Sessions will be held on Wednesdays during the month of May and will be 45 minutes to an hour in length. Participation certificates will be issued. She mentioned the importance of including individuals with lived experience who could speak during the sessions. Primary care providers, psychiatrists, and advanced practitioners such as PAs and NPs comprise the targeted audience. The work group is open to other provider suggestions. An ECHO session was suggested. Bernard Silvernail said the FDA provided his organization (The Alliance for Best Benzodiazepine Practices) with an initial approval for an ECHO series. Recordings of educational modules was also discussed.

Susanna will look into CEUs for this educational series. She suggested it would be helpful for Alexis to attend the next Provider Education Work Group meeting on March 17<sup>th</sup> from 12 to 1 p.m.

#### **Subcommittee Breakout Sessions:**

Peer Support: Participants: D. Foster, Christy Huff, Nicole Lamberson, Rachael Martin, Barbara Connolly, Lisa Gemmill, Jen Place. Members of the Peer Support Program core group are D. Foster, Alexis Ritvo, Trina Faatz, and Terri Schreiber. D spoke about the Peer Support

Program phases: Phase 1: Curriculum Development, Phase 2: Colorado Launch, and Phase 3: National Launch. Ginger Ross is serving as a training consultant for the program. Her work includes module development. The training module will remain the property of the Consortium, although Choices Training will have the right to use it for their training purposes. D suggested that the Choices training material could be improved.

Core Group members have been meeting with Ginger on a regular basis to discuss program development and the budget. Terri Schreiber's organization, TSRG, will be overseeing the management and distribution of program funds. Individuals with lived experience will be involved in the program as consultants. The training program will consist of a core module followed by other sub-modules, including one devoted to benzodiazepines. Subcommittee members discussed how the training incorporates benzodiazepines, i.e., how they overlap and how they differ from other substances, and the difference between the roles of a clinician and a peer support specialist. Terri also mentioned stigma and patient stereotyping, indicating that compassion and empathy are essential attributes for a clinician or peer support specialist.

D will set up a separate group email for the Peer Support Subcommittee. Other work group members will be asked for feedback regarding the subcommittee's work plan.

Jen Place asked subcommittee members if they would review a handout put together by the Recovery Work Group members who have identified as recovering from a substance use disorder. She said the language portion of the handout is important and applies to individuals with a history of benzodiazepine use/injury. Link to document: <https://corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Supporting-Recovery-1-Pager-2021.pdf>

To submit comments: [jennifer.place@cuanschultz.edu](mailto:jennifer.place@cuanschultz.edu)

Provider Education: Participants: Alexis Ritvo, Michael Bohan, Peter Eliasberg, Sophie Feffer, Valsa Madhava, Chris Schultz. Participants discussed the four-part Prescriber Curriculum Lunch and Learn learning objectives and session outline: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1d278EuiyB0\\_vbL6sG1hcz8EWc3fT3jxF/edit?usp=sharing&oid=108169764528553890604&rtpof=true&sd=true](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1d278EuiyB0_vbL6sG1hcz8EWc3fT3jxF/edit?usp=sharing&oid=108169764528553890604&rtpof=true&sd=true)

Public Awareness/Community Engagement: Participants: Jose Esquibel, Susanna Cooper, Gail Dawson, Bernard Silvernail, Sonja Bjurstrom, Duke Rumely, J.C. Curle. Bernard spoke about his organization's plan for a national benzodiazepine symposium. The symposium is based on a three-day International Benzodiazepine Symposium held in Bend, Oregon in 2017. The Oregon symposium included multiple breakout sessions and keynote speakers; however, not enough emphasis was placed on benzodiazepine-affected communities. In order to effect a change in behavior, it is extremely motivating to expose providers to people who have been affected by benzodiazepines. The target date for the symposium is early 2023.

Bernie reported that a group of medical professionals (including Alexis Ritvo and Christy Huff) are working on a paper concerning Benzodiazepine-induced Neurological Dysfunction (BIND). They are hoping to publish this work as an editorial in a medical journal. Plans are to gather all the terms used to describe the benzodiazepine issue in order to establish a formal term for a benzodiazepine injury.

J.C. Curle said she is interested in developing PSAs to explain different benzodiazepines, as related injuries are very confusing to people who haven't been exposed.

Legislative Subcommittee: Jose Esquibel said the subcommittee did not hold a breakout session. He mentioned that it would be important for the work group to prepare for this summer's Interim Study Committee meetings which will begin in late July. Work group members could report on progress made and suggest policy recommendations. The ISC comprises 10 state senate and house legislators (five Democrats and five Republicans). Jose said it would be particularly important to include the BIND definition in ISC discussions. Consortium staff is available to assist with testimony preparation.

**Member Updates:**

Duke Rumely: Sober AF Entertainment is offering speaking opportunities at their events during Nuggets, AVS, and Rockies games. Duke will follow up with D and Alexis by email.

**Adjournment/Next Meeting:**

The meeting adjourned at 1:01 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 5, 2022 from noon to 1 p.m.

Attachment: Work Group Roster