

## Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

### Benzodiazepine Action Work Group Meeting Minutes

June 4, 2024 via Zoom

#### **Present:**

Barbara Connolly, Barry Cochran, Bernie Silvernail, D.E. Foster, Jake Ressler, J.C. Curle, Joanna Dalin, John Staight, Kath Bates, Lisa Gemmill, Marjorie DeWert, Terri Schreiber, Trina Faatz, Valsa Madhava, MD

Consortium: Shayna Micucci, Hilary Bryant, Teresa Cantwell

**Absent:** See attached roster.

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

A motion was made to approve the May 2024 meeting minutes. Motion approved.

#### **Projects/Subgroups - Next Fiscal Year:**

In the absence of both co-chairs, Shayna Micucci reviewed the work group's mission and norms, as follows:

#### **Norms:**

- Introductions to include pronouns.
- All work group participants remain muted until speaking.
- The Zoom hand feature, or chat, to be used when possible to share information.
- Allow other meeting participants to finish their thoughts before speaking.
- Ensure space for new ideas, comments, and people.
- Focus discussions on actionable efforts.

#### **Topics for Next Fiscal Year:**

*Resource Guide:* The co-chairs have suggested projects and possible subcommittees for the upcoming fiscal year. One of the projects suggested is the development of a resource guide to be posted on the Consortium work group's webpage. The guide can be shared with the many people who contact the Consortium because they are personally impacted by benzodiazepines or are seeking information for a loved one or friend. Meeting participants were asked to contact Shayna directly if they would like to participate in a resource guide committee to be led by Madison Zang. Email: [Shayna.micucci@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:Shayna.micucci@cuanschutz.edu) Subject: Resource Guide

*Training Evaluation:* Another area of work suggested is the evaluation of training sessions that were held over the past year, i.e., what went well, where did we miss the mark, should the marketing be improved, etc. To date, approximately 300 people have received training. To participate in the committee, email Shayna directly.

*Provider Education:* A number of free education courses are offered to providers on the Consortium website. The work group is also planning to offer an education session at the upcoming Colorado Pharmacists Society annual conference. The session, to be led by Dr. Alexis Ritvo and Terri Schreiber, will focus on BIND. A subcommittee could look into training for inpatient settings such as psychiatric and treatment clinics involved in patient tapering.

*Work Group Meeting Frequency:* The schedule may change to every other month, with intervening months set aside for committee meetings.

Comments:

Bernie Silvernail: An article could be written for a medical journal about the training accomplishments. This would raise awareness of the widespread issues associated with benzodiazepine use.

John Staight: Doctors listen to other doctors (referencing the educational sessions provided by Dr. Ritvo and Dr. Wright). Patients with lived experience are too easily discounted by the medical community. It's unfortunate there aren't more physicians involved in the work group. John asked how the work group could engage more medical community members.

Valsa Madhava: Certain facilities across the country could include deprescribing clinics. Tapering is very labor intensive. Doctors may not have enough experience. Having a deprescribing clinic with a team involved may be the best option.

John Staight said he would like to continue the deprescribing clinic discussion at some point.

Shayna mentioned the individuals from various medical settings who have attended peer training, which has led to an increase in awareness among other clinicians.

Kath Bates spoke about circulating educational flyers to those who have attended peer sessions and suggested that flyers could also be distributed to law enforcement and rehab facilities.

Barb Connolly suggested a person with lived experience should be part of an educational session lead by physicians. She would like to participate in a subcommittee.

Trina Faatz said patients with benzodiazepine issues are often told by physicians that they have a mental health disorder. She mentioned that changes in some prescribing practices did not occur until legislation mandated them and that the same issue exists with benzodiazepines.

J.C. Curle agreed with Trina and said the issues are both social and legislative. She mentioned the work group had discussed a public service announcement about a year ago, which was never done, and how that could be paired with legislative action.

Shayna said she would be open to public awareness ideas and would like to discuss them further.

Bernie mentioned the Alliance's current Kaiser Permanente clinic study pertaining to prescription restriction funded by the FDA.

Training Updates:

The last Colorado course will be held on June 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. The target audience is geared towards substance use disorder professionals, social workers, counselors, peers, licensed marriage and family therapists, other mental health providers, and any other providers that would like to attend.

The Louisiana TPN will take place June 26 – June 28<sup>th</sup>:  
<https://tpn.health/events/benzodiazepine062624/>

Class participants will be invited to a listening session. Shayna is working on a list of class participant questions that will address their experiences during the educational sessions in order to better understand how attendees are actually using what they learned during the sessions.

An evaluation meeting to review marketing and target audiences will be held later in the summer. Additional classes will be scheduled in the fall, depending upon budget allocations.

### **Provider Education/CMEs:**

Alexis Ritvo and Terri Schreiber will be conducting training next week for members of the Colorado Pharmacists Society.

Gail Dawson is putting together a listing of mental health focused nurses in Colorado in anticipation of future training.

### **Member Comments & Updates:**

Jake Ressler has raised \$1,200 to create subsidized subreddit training (a sub-community of Reddit). Thirteen people are scheduled for training, followed by an additional 15 people within a BIND subreddit. Jake is continuing his research study and hopes to recruit about 1,500 participants.

Terri Schreiber said the term “benzo-wise” was discussed during the last training session. A logo has been created using the terminology. Terri asked for comments regarding the terminology and potential certification.

Bernie said the Alliance has considered the terminology and some kind of certificate of completion for providers. He offered to participate in a subcommittee to discuss the subject if one is formed.

J.C. said the word benzo-wise could be misleading, particularly if the clinician only took one class. Proficiency requires working with patients for a long time in order to become fully aware of what is going on. A certificate of completion at the end of a course might be more appropriate.

Terri Schreiber mentioned that the discussion does not include only medical prescribers, but also peer recovery support specialists.

Barbara Connolly asked about the list of “benzo cooperative” providers. J.C. explained the Benzodiazepine Information Coalition (BIC) application process for prescriber recommendations.

Barry Cochran suggested the use of “benzo aware” until providers have been trained and are proficient. He also suggested mandatory yearly benzodiazepine CMEs for prescribers.

John Staight recently met with both the Executive Director and Chief Medical Officer of Behavioral Health in Vail to discuss prescribing practices. He suggested that Jose Esquibel

might be the appropriate contact for them. He also suggested other ways to increase public awareness about the use of benzodiazepines.

Kath Bates had suggestions regarding highlighting patient complaints and offered to assist with public awareness efforts.

**Adjournment/Next Meeting:**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 2, 2024 from Noon to 1:00 p.m.

Attachments: Work group roster