

Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention

Affected Families & Friends Work Group Meeting Minutes

July 19, 2024 via Zoom

Present:

Sarah Werner, Co-Chair

Dean Taylor, The Health Partnership

Jessica Triplett, BHA

Angela Williams, Advocates for Recovery Colorado

Sarah Haden, Community Economic Defense Program

Consortium: Jose Esquibel, Hilary Bryant, Jessica Eaddy, Jen Place, Michael Davidson, Teresa Cantwell

Absent: See attached roster.

Work group Co-chair, Sarah Werner, called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

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

Presentation - How to Navigate the Legal System and Drug Court: Angela Williams, Peer and Family Specialist, Advocates for Recovery Colorado, and Sarah Haden, Certified Recovery Coach and Peer Recovery Specialist, Community Economic Defense Project.

Angela's presentation was divided into two sections: interviews with individuals with SUD who are in recovery and were involved in the criminal justice system, and peer professionals' experiences. A copy of Angela Williams's presentation is attached to the minutes.

Sarah spoke about her history of substance use and years of involvement in the criminal justice system, including her time spent on probation. Sarah eventually became a peer specialist working for the Denver County Court. She is now working towards a bachelor's degree with a concentration in substance use.

Comments:

Denver County has multiple programs. Denver County has four peer specialists available for anyone located in the Denver County area. The district attorney's office also has approximately three or four specialists. Anyone arrested for a drug charge can be connected to a peer specialist. Other state programs include ke'nekt, an independently operated peer organization that accepts Medicaid. (Teri Smith: tkenekt@outlook.com)

A family member's presence and support in court has a very positive impact, whereas "making excuses" (enabling) for an individual with substance use disorder has a negative impact on behavior.

The Economic Defense Project was founded by four attorneys during COVID to help people who were being evicted. The organization assists with evictions and is also involved in housing support/vouchers for people with substance use and mental health disorders. The staff includes

case managers, peer support, and a therapist who works to connect individuals with community resources throughout the state.

Meeting participants discussed the high levels of deaths associated with overdose, the barriers involved in overcoming stigma related to substance use disorders, and the importance of involving peer specialists to help individuals transition into recovery.

Sarah Haden mentioned Tribe Recovery Homes. <https://www.triberecoveryhomes.com/> This organization works with the Denver County Court. Their peer navigators assist people transitioning from the justice system to treatment. She also spoke about the penalties exacted by the courts that are based on the different types of drug possession and the level and number of offenses.

Jessica Triplett said she would send Sarah Haden information about a BHA program related to family members of individuals with SUD (CRAFT). <https://bha.colorado.gov/blog-post/crafting-a-stronger-support-system-for-people-in-recovery>

Jen Place asked if there is a listing of Colorado courts across the state. Angela suggested the public defender's office would be the best source for information.

Announcements:

"Stories in Black and White" is an exhibit of black and white photos of persons who have suffered from SUD tentatively scheduled in September. The project is supported by Becca Barnhart, CDC Foundation, Sarah Hoke, Rocky Mountain HIDTA, and the work group. Submissions will be solicited from those in recovery as well as those who lost their lives.

Compassion Card Project. The "Compassion Cards" express the work group's concern for families affected by substance use disorder. The cards will include a QR code and link to the work group's Resource Guide, which should be available by the end of this year. The work group is collaborating with an artist to design the card and envelope. A recent meeting was held with the Denver Coroner's office regarding distribution to overdose victims' families.

Family Organization Roundtable (potentially to be held this fall). The work group is developing a list of non-profits started by Colorado families after the loss of a loved one to SUD. The goal of the roundtable is to enhance awareness and foster communication and cooperation. (Contact the work group co-chairs with information regarding organizations that qualify.)

Future Meeting Topics:

August: Naloxone/Fentanyl Awareness

September: Family Support in Recovery

October: Prevention Tactics

November: Benzodiazepines - what they are and why they are a problem

Adjournment/next meeting:

The meeting was adjourned at 1 p.m. The next work group meeting will be held on Friday, August 16, 2024 from 12-1 p.m.

Attachments: Work group roster, presentation