**COMMITTEE NAME:** Addictions Practice Group

**DATE:**
March 26, 2020

**Time:**
12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

**Presiding:**
Mary Gay Abbott-Young, Kendria McWilliams

**Recorded By:**
Shauna Moses

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**All Participants on Conference Call:** Mary Gay Abbott-Young, Mary Pat Angelini, Kacey Batushansky, Ileen Bradley, Carolann Cavaiola, Julie Drew, Linda Mayo, Kendria McWilliams, Linda Mur, Damiris Piliro, Hilary Krosney Rediker, Amanda Santana, Barbara Schlichting, Lou Schwarcz, Nicole Tursi

**Staff:** Mary Abrams, Shauna Moses, Debra Wentz

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**AGENDA ITEMS/ISSUE** | **DISCUSSION** | **ACTIONS TAKEN/OUTCOME** | **TIMEFRAME** | **WHO’S RESPONSIBLE**
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Approval of Minutes from the January 9, 2020 Practice Group meeting | N/A | Ileen Bradley made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Kendria McWilliams and the minutes were passed unanimously. | N/A | N/A

Coronavirus: Updates and Sharing of Best Practices | Members were asked to share information about their use of telehealth; any canceled activities and programs; how programs, especially residential, are handling situations of staff becoming unavailable; and how programs are isolating clients and staff when needed. | Members can continue to share this information by writing to Shauna Moses at smoses@njamhaa.org. Mary Abrams will send a request for members’ feedback and set up a separate web page to share the information provided. | Ongoing | Members

(continued)

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**Note:**
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<th>AGENDA ITEMS/ISSUE</th>
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<td>Coronavirus: Updates and Sharing of Best Practices (continued)</td>
<td>Challenges and concerns regarding urine drug screens were shared.</td>
<td>In addition, NJAMHAA should include in its advocacy the possibility of not having enough staff to continue operating programs, especially residential and outpatient.</td>
<td>Following this conference call</td>
<td>Debra Wentz, Mary Abrams, Shauna Moses</td>
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<td>It was recommended that NJAMHAA share this feedback with Assistant Commissioner Mielke and request that UDS be suspended or optional (conduct only when drug use is suspected) for a period of time. It was noted that lack of personal protective equipment is a significant related issue. It was suggested that provider try to obtain masks from their county offices of emergency management.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Members</td>
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<td>It was agreed that another conference call will be scheduled for two to three weeks after this call.</td>
<td>Mid-April [This call was held on April 13, 2020.]</td>
<td>Scheduling the call: Debra Wentz, Shauna Moses, Mary Gay Abbott-Young, Kendria McWilliams</td>
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**Next Practice Group Meeting:** May 14, 2020 from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. at NJAMHAA or via conference call, depending on the status of the coronavirus crisis

*Notes on feedback regarding coronavirus begins on the next page.*
Notes on Feedback regarding Coronavirus Shared

Telehealth

Maryville Addiction Treatment Center: Using telehealth in outpatient for a large number of clients. It’s working well and clients are responding favorably to it.

Center for Family Services (CFFS): Using telehealth, but not for groups due to confidentiality concerns. Noted concerns about Medicaid not paying for intensive outpatient service since this program requires group counseling.

Jewish Family & Children’s Service (JFCS) of Greater Monmouth: Implemented safeguards to help ensure confidentiality and protect clients as much as possible. Clients are given HIPAA and 42CFR information and are asked to sign virtual agreements stating they understand the risks. Clients are also asked to turn off their video cameras during group sessions and to establish avatars using their initials or any names other than their own.

Somerset Treatment Centers (STS): It was noted that a risk to confidentiality when facilitating group sessions via telehealth is that clients could zoom in and see into other clients’ homes.

STS is continuing to conduct intakes for opioid use disorder treatment clients in person and moved clients to level 1 in order to provide individual psychotherapy for them.

Damon House: Also providing individual counseling through telehealth. Would like to conduct groups; awaiting guidance.

FAMILYConnections: Outpatient and intensive outpatient programs are operating remotely. Individual counseling is being provided; group sessions are not being conducted.

Urine Drug Screens (UDS)

The Bridge: Outpatient and intensive outpatient programs are operating remotely. The challenge is obtaining UDS. The agency made arrangements for clients to go to a lab.

CFFS: Experiencing the same challenge regarding UDS. It was noted that outpatient clients can be served for some amount of time without having UDS done. This issue reinforces the importance of providing services via telehealth with video so providers can see how clients are doing. Regarding using labs for UDS, there is a concern that clients may not observed, so the samples may not be theirs.

FAMILYConnections: UDS are not being done.

STS: Oral swabs are still being done; however, this will stop soon and resume sometime in April. It was noted that UDS is not mentioned in the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services’ emergency funding policy.

How Programs are Addressing Reduced Availability of Staff

Damon House: Some staff are not comfortable working due to fear of contracting coronavirus. Many appointments have been canceled, resulting in fiscal difficulties.

Integrity House: The program schedule was changed to comply with the directive for social distancing. Group counseling is not being provided, although clients are receiving individual counseling. The exclusionary criteria for inpatient services have been modified and referrals are no longer being accepted from outside providers. Clients are screened for symptoms of coronavirus (respiratory illness and immune deficiency) for the first seven days.
This member noted that she heard Department of Health (DOH) regulations regarding counselor-to-client ratios were being relaxed, but no official written communication has been received. She will try to obtain information and share anything she may obtain.

Isolation

Damon House: Has limited capacity for isolation, which is resulting in delayed admissions. Medical care and counseling are being provided in rooms where clients are isolated. It’s a challenge to keep newer clients, including those referred through Drug Court, isolated.

   A concern was noted about clients not being able to sit through three hours of counseling via telehealth each week, as intensive outpatient programs are required to provide.

STS: Staff who were exposed to coronavirus are quarantined for 14 days. Medications are being provided at curbside and doorsteps for clients who have or may have coronavirus.

CFFS: In the Support Team for Addiction Recovery program, the staff are maintaining community contact with clients and providing transportation. A concern was noted about what Medicaid will pay for if group counseling cannot be provided; the $6,000 maximum will be reached quickly. There is also a concern about billing and audits.

Oaks Integrated Care: The Opioid Overdose Recovery Program (OORP) is contacting clients via telephone.

Additional Feedback Shared

Damon House: Concern about Medicaid being the first payer for long-term residential services. Some Drug Court clients are enrolled in Medicaid, but Medicaid reportedly is not agreeing to be the first payer.

Maryville Addiction Treatment Center: Question about if the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act applies to substance use treatment organizations.
   In response, NJAMHAA shared that the federal government’s interpretation has been requested. It is possible that the law will leave this interpretation up to state governments. Providers are advised to consult with their legal counsel. [Following this meeting, NJAMHAA shared information from the Employers Association of New Jersey and the law firm of Greenbaum Rowe Smith Davis LLP. Click here to download this information.]
   It was noted that Governor Murphy recently signed an Executive Order for child care centers to close unless they are serving children of essential healthcare workers, which includes mental healthcare and substance use treatment providers. It was also noted that employees who contract coronavirus are eligible for paid sick leave.