



Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

Director's Quarterly Leadership Meeting with Boards, Commissions and Committees (BCC)

Date: October 2, 2019 (FY20 First Quarter Report)

BCC: Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council (AODAAC)

BCC Representative: Elyse Grossman, Chair

FY19 First Quarter Activities Update:

Although the full Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council (AODAAC) did not meet in July or August, the AODAAC Executive Committee has still been active this summer. In July, our co-Vice Chair gave testimony on behalf of AODAAC before the Interagency Commission on Homelessness. He talked about the correlation between homelessness and drug and alcohol abuse and urged the Commission to be proactive and to engage in a coordinated effort to both prevent and treat issues of alcohol and drug use and abuse among the homeless population. In August, our other co-Vice Chair attended and represented AODAAC at the 4th Annual Overdose and Prevention Vigil put on by S.O.U.L. (Surviving Our Ultimate Loss) and other partnering agencies.

The Executive Committee also met in August to discuss its vision and goals for the year. And the first full AODAAC meeting was held on September 12, 2019. From these various discussions, AODAAC has the following priorities for Fiscal Year 2020:

1. To Examine How Vaping and E-Cigarettes are Addressed in the County and Provide Recommendations to the County Executive and County Council to Improve the Situation

Research shows that childhood and early adolescence is a time when people are most likely to begin abusing drugs – including tobacco, alcohol, and illegal and prescription drugs. One issue that AODAAC members were specifically concerned about was the increase of vaping and e-cigarettes among youth.

Nationally, there has been a sharp spike in vaping and the use of e-cigarettes in middle and high schools across the country.ⁱ From 2011 to 2015, e-cigarette use by high school students increased by 900%. And then, from 2017 to 2018, the number of high school students reporting that they used e-cigarettes during the past year nearly doubled.ⁱⁱ As of 2018, more than 3.6 million U.S. youth report using e-cigarettes in the previous 30 days. This includes 1 in 5

high school students and 1 in 20 middle school students. Unfortunately, there is very little data about usage rates in the County itself.

The Montgomery County Public School's website currently states that "e-cigarettes are prohibited on school grounds [and] when found, they are treated like tobacco and cigarettes." However, anecdotally, AODAAC has heard of problems that schools and other places that support adolescents face after finding e-cigarettes. For example, AODAAC has heard reports that the police will not remove the e-cigarettes which leaves teachers and administrators with the problem of disposing of these products safely and without risking recovery by youth.

This year AODAAC will examine what data is available within the County and arrange meetings to learn more about this issue with representatives from the Montgomery County Police Department, the Montgomery County Public Schools, and other affected and concerned individuals. Our goal will be to provide recommendations to the County Executive and the County Council on how to best address and improve this situation within the County.

2. To Continue to Advocate for: a) Adequate Funding for Alcohol and Drug Prevention and Treatment Programs; and, b) Evidence-Based Laws Regulating Alcohol and Drugs in the County and the State

The consequences of alcohol and drug use and abuse are becoming increasingly lethal. In 2018, there were 2,406 drug- and alcohol-related intoxication deaths in Maryland.ⁱⁱⁱ This is the ninth year in a row that intoxication deaths have increased, and, represents a 5% increase over the number of deaths in 2017.

Of these deaths, 89 occurred in Montgomery County which is 58 percent more deaths than occurred here in 2007. However, for the first time in eight years, the number of deaths has finally started to decrease and is down from 116 deaths last year. Together, prescription opioids and alcohol were responsible for over one-third of all drug- and alcohol-related intoxication deaths in the County during 2018 (18 percent and 21 percent, respectively). However, 80 percent of alcohol-related deaths occurred in combination with opioids.

Each year, the County spends millions of dollars on alcohol and drug prevention programs and alcohol and drug treatment programs; sadly, this is not enough. This money covers a range of programs from the Adult and Child Outpatient Behavioral Health Services, to Avery Road Treatment Center, to Access to Behavioral Health Services, among many other programs.

Prevention of alcohol and drug abuse is extremely important; research shows that \$1 spent on prevention can result in roughly \$10 in long-term savings.^{iv} However, for many years, there has been only one person responsible for coordinating and executing drug and alcohol prevention programs for the entire county. Unfortunately, the person who had filled this position – lacking adequate funding and resources – left County employment in 2017 and the position was vacant for over a year. Although the position is now filled, one person is not

nearly enough.

Substance use disorder treatment also saves money, with research showing \$7 saved for every \$1 spent.^v Although the County has not cut spending for treatment programming to the same extent as other programs over the past decade, a failure to adequately fund these treatment programs can have serious consequences. These include numerous financial, physical, and emotional costs on individuals with substance use disorders, their families, and the County as a whole.

This year, AODAAC intends to continue to push for greater awareness of the inadequacy of the current level of funding for alcohol and drug treatment and prevention in the county, and thus also advocate for more funding for these programs.

Additionally, although the headlines in the news have focused on the dramatic increase of opioid-related overdose deaths, these are just one aspect of the underlying problem in our County. The County also suffers from injuries and deaths related to alcohol consumption, illicit drug use, and inappropriate use of many types of prescription drugs. Alcohol-related harms may not seem as urgent as opioid-related overdoses because they are so commonplace. But, alcohol plays a role in suicides, homicides, motor vehicle crashes, chronic diseases (e.g. liver cirrhosis), cancers, and other intentional or accidental injuries and deaths.

Although alcohol has an appropriate place in restaurants and entertainment venues, other aspects of alcohol sales, advertisements and promotions still need to be regulated. In the same manner, although doctors will still want and need to prescribe legal drugs, policies need to be put in place to prevent over-prescribing and to ensure the proper disposal of extra pills.

Therefore, this year AODAAC will also advocate for stronger and more comprehensive evidence-based laws regulating alcohol and drugs. To do this, it will be holding its second Annual Legislative Retreat in January to review how to provide written and oral testimony and to examine and discuss relevant state- and county-level bills.

3. To continue to strengthen AODAAC by: a) Increasing Awareness of the Council; b) Increasing Recruitment Efforts for New Members; and c) Creating stronger collaborations with other Montgomery County Boards, Coalitions, and Councils

Although alcohol and other drugs effect numerous individuals and their families throughout the County, non-effected people are not always aware of how widespread or harmful these substances can be. Additionally, it appears that many people do not know of the existence of AODAAC and what it has been tasked to do.

Therefore, this year AODAAC will work to increase awareness of the council and increase recruitment efforts for new members. AODAAC members are currently planning more events to give AODAAC visibility in the community and working to create stronger collaborations

with other Montgomery County Boards, Coalitions, and Councils. Some of these events include:

- a. The 2019 Montgomery County Thanksgiving Day Parade. (AODAAC applied and is waiting to hear if the group was accepted to be in the Parade again this year.)
- b. A Marijuana Forum to educate members of the community on how recreational marijuana is currently used, the public health consequences of its use, the laws surrounding its use both nationally and in Maryland, and the impact its use has on various populations (e.g. youth, mature adults, etc.). The event will be held at a Montgomery County High School from 10AM to 12PM on a Saturday in December.
- c. The 2020 Annual Spring Forum which is a collaboration between AODAAC, the Mental Health Advisory Council (MHAC), the Tree of Hope Association, and the Montgomery County Child Welfare Services / Citizens Review Panel. It usually includes a resource fair, a keynote speaker on a relevant topic, and a panel discussion with representatives from several County Departments.

ⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2016). E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Available at:

https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/2016_SGR_Exec_Summ_508.pdf

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2018). Surgeon General's Advisory on E-cigarette Use Among Youth. Available at: <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/documents/surgeon-generals-advisory-on-e-cigarette-use-among-youth-2018.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (2018, June). Unintentional Drug- and Alcohol-Related Intoxication Deaths in Maryland Annual Report, 2017.

^{iv} Werthamer L & Chatterji P (1998). Preventive Intervention Cost-Effectiveness and Cost Benefit. Literature Review. Published online by NIDA

^v Gerstein, D.R., Johnson, R.A., Harwood, H.J., Fountain, D., Suter, N., & Malloy, K. (1994). Evaluating Recovery Services: The California Drug and Alcohol Treatment Assessment (CALDATA); General Report.