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To: BSAS Providers

From: Hilary Jacobs, BSAS Director

Date: February 26, 2014

Re: Opioid Overdose in Massachusetts

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has just issued an advisory to the treatment community about a marked increase in deaths since the beginning of the year that were reportedly linked to the use of heroin contaminated with the drug fentanyl. Details of the advisory can be found on SAMHSA's website ([click here](#)).

For the past several years, the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS) has been engaged in a targeted effort to reduce the number of fatal and non-fatal opioid-related overdoses in Massachusetts. Despite the success of many of these initiatives, community reports of fatal and non-fatal overdoses remain a significant concern and area of BSAS focus.

Recognizing that individuals who are in treatment are at high risk for relapse and overdose, it is important that you educate your clients about their own risks for overdose and how to prevent, recognize and respond to an overdose. There are a number of resources available to support you and your clients.

New Practice Guidance on *Integrating Opioid Overdose Prevention Strategies into Treatment*

BSAS has recently released a new [Practice Guidance](#) on integrating opioid overdose prevention strategies into treatment settings. The Practice Guidance includes detailed recommendations related to incorporating overdose prevention into organizational policies, operations, service delivery and treatment. Many resources are included as well.

The Bystander Nasal-Naloxone Program

A description of the program and the list of naloxone program sites is posted on the BSAS website ([click here](#)). The fact sheet is also posted in [Spanish](#) and [Portuguese](#). If there is a naloxone program site in the vicinity of your program, you may be able to arrange for staff to come on-site for integrated screening for HIV, STIs and HCV in addition to overdose prevention training and naloxone distribution with your clients. Alternatively, you can support client access to naloxone by referring them to local

naloxone program sites. For clients of residential programs that already have a naloxone kit, or receive one while in the program, we encourage you to allow them to keep their naloxone kits with them.

Staff Training on Overdose Prevention, Educational Resources, and Group Curricula

BSAS-funded treatment programs can access free onsite staff training (with free CEUs) and staff naloxone responder training (with distribution) from **SPHERE**. Please call 800-530-2770 x261 to make arrangements. **SPHERE** has also developed overdose prevention resources for programs to use, which can be downloaded for free from their website.

These resources include a group education curriculum on opioid overdose prevention and response, as well as a card game that can be played with clients, and educational posters.

These resources are available at their website at:

www.healthimperatives.org/sphere/opioid-overdose-prevention.

Free Educational Materials

BSAS has developed educational materials on opioid overdose prevention that are available for free from the Massachusetts Health Promotion Clearinghouse. Please go to www.maclearinghouse.com to order some for your program. Items numbers SA1067 (SA1054 in Spanish), SA1068 and SA1069 are related to opioid overdose.

Prescription of Naloxone

For programs that have prescribers on staff, clients can be prescribed naloxone.

Information on how to prescribe naloxone is available at <http://prescribetoprevent.org>.

Thanks to legislation that passed in 2012, naloxone can now also be prescribed to family members and friends of at-risk opioid users. See Sections 11 and 32:

<http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2012/Chapter192>

Individuals dealing with heroin or other opioid problems should be urged to get treatment or seek further treatment. Medication Assisted Treatment using FDA-approved medications such as methadone, buprenorphine and extended release naltrexone can effectively treat heroin/opioid addictions and enable people to recover and lead healthy, productive lives. Those seeking treatment for opioid dependence can find help through the Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Helpline: 800-327-5050, TTY 888-448-8321 or online at www.helpline-online.com.

Your partnership in these efforts to reduce the number of opioid overdose deaths in Massachusetts is greatly appreciated. Please make staff aware of these resources and support us by educating clients, making referrals to Medication Assisted Treatment, and allowing clients to keep naloxone kits with them in the program. The goal is to reduce the number of deaths so these individuals can have the possibility of recovery one day.