



Confronting COVID-19 and Opioid Use Disorders in the United States: The Confluence of a Global Pandemic and a National Epidemic

A CEPOP-MAPDA Policy Webinar Series

Since the U.S. public health emergency was announced in March 2020, the lives of most Americans have been upended due to stay-at-home orders, social distancing and quarantines, and other safety measures to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. With millions confined to their homes as COVID-19 claims hundreds of thousands of lives worldwide, many people with opioid use disorders have struggled to ensure the continuity of care required to maintain sobriety and avoid harm.

It is recognized that individuals with opioid use disorders already have a difficult time accessing evidence-based treatment – with only 10% of the more than 20 million receiving such care. Stay-at-home orders and other measures aimed at flattening the curve of infection disrupt the face-to-face treatment and counseling that drives recovery and the lessening of opioid-related overdose deaths beginning in 2018.

In response to these challenges, the federal government has begun to implement a string of regulatory and policy changes responding to current circumstances and maintaining access to evidence-based treatment and wraparound services. Federal agency partners such as the DEA, SAMHSA, CMS, HHS and others have responded with greater flexibility for patients and healthcare providers.

Many policymakers are starting to query how COVID-19 era opioid policies might serve to inform the foundation for a long-term, comprehensive infrastructure promoting recovery and related treatment and support services? The **Collaborative for Effective Prescription Opioid Policies (CEPOP)** and **Mothers Against Prescription Drug Abuse (MAPDA)** will use its national convening capability to investigate the impact of the pandemic paradigm on the future of care for opioid use disorder. By engaging thought leaders on the national response to both public health challenges, CEPOP and MAPDA will position these national webinars to identify best practices and how current opportunities and strategies lead to better outcomes.

Webinar Series Overview: Areas of interest for the 60-minute online events cover healthcare delivery and OUD/SUD treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic from initiation of care through treatment (dates TBD; with each webinar occurring approximately 10 days to two weeks following the previous):

- Digital health interventions and telemedicine;
- Revised restrictions around MAT initiation and maintenance;
- Access to and utilization of opioid overdose reversal medications; and
- Addressing excess medications in the home.

Each webinar will focus on a specific policy intervention and ongoing federal efforts to advance new approaches. CEPOP and MAPDA participants and national leaders will be invited to provide their perspectives as preeminent voices within this field. Q&A sessions will be available for participants during each moderated session.

Visibility and Awareness: CEPOP has a proven track record in developing, advertising, executing and disseminating policy-specific roundtables core to pressing issues within the national epidemic response. Held via WebEx, each of the proposed webinars will be recorded and posted on CEPOP's YouTube site for distribution and future reference. Examples of past events include topics on [Safe Disposal Strategies](#) (Nov. 2019) and [Multimodal Analgesia](#) (Aug. 2016).