



March 25, 2020

Opioid Task Force Update: Keeping Our Communities Safe in these Uncertain Times:

Dear Colleagues and Partners -

In such a short time, our worlds have turned upside down. Here at the DA's office, courts are closed but the day-to-day of criminal justice: arraignments, orders of protection for domestic violence, and other pressing matters continue. We are working with on-call judges and using technology and are incredibly impressed with the staff of dedicated lawyers, victim witness advocates, managers, and administrators for digging in and adjusting.

I am certain you feel the same way about your colleagues and, for that, we are lucky.

I wanted to send out some information and updates just in case you have not seen certain things:

Guns and Kids:

One thing to consider is that with so many kids at home, gun safety should be at the top of conversations. This is from a couple of years ago but speaks to the importance of keeping firearms stored safely - even more important as we are all in close quarters and inquisitive kids might be at risk:

<https://www.thetrace.org/rounds/study-american-children-unlocked-loaded-gun-storage/>

Addiction and COVID-19:

As we all know, people who are in active addiction or recovery, as well as folks who may consider their substance use to be recreational, may be at increased risk from COVID-19. "Because it attacks the lungs, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 could be an especially serious threat to those who smoke tobacco or marijuana or who vape. People with opioid use disorder (OUD) and methamphetamine use disorder may also be vulnerable due to those drugs' effects on respiratory and pulmonary health."

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2020/03/covid-19-potential-implications-individuals-substance-use-disorders>

In testing news:

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved the first rapid coronavirus diagnostic test, with a detection time of about 45 minutes,

https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/927396?src=wnl_edit_tpal&uac=366143FX&impID=2322673&faf=1

General Public Health Information:

You should all be getting updates from the CDC and Ma DPH - their information is updated regularly - here are a few links you might find relevant:

- For DEA-Registered Practitioners: [Alert Regarding Use of Telemedicine during Public Health Emergency-COVID-19](#), March 24.
- For Section 35 providers: [Section 35 Visitor Guidance](#), March 23.
- For Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) Licensees: [Preventing and Mitigating COVID-19 in BSAS Licensed Programs](#), March 18.
- For Opioid Treatment Programs: [Alert Regarding COVID-19 for Opioid Treatment Programs](#), March 18.

For some people, good information is a balm. For others, too much information increases anxiety. To get up-to-date alerts from MA DPH, sent directly to your phone, text COVIDMA to 888-777.

Sober Homes:

We have reached out to MASH - many of our friends and family in sober homes may be facing the combined challenges of this epidemic, their recovery, and losing their income. MASH has resources on its website for the certified sober homes and residents: <https://mashsoberhousing.org/resources/other-resources/>

Behavioral health and loneliness:

- The AARP has some thoughts about avoiding social isolation during this pandemic: <https://www.aarp.org/health/conditions-treatments/info-2020/coronavirus-social-isolation-loneliness.html>
- The Huffington Post did an article a few days ago about implications for AA/NA meetings. I know that everyone is different. I have spoken to folks in long-term recovery about doing on-line meetings. But as the article suggests, that is a fairly privileged option, requiring access to the internet, a computer, and zoom or another platform. They also point out that in Seattle, home of the first Recovery Cafe, one of the two locations shut down and that many providers of recovery services are seeing a real drop in the number of folks seeking treatment. This may bode ill for the future as more people get deeper into addiction. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/alcoholics-anonymous-coronavirus-outbreak_n_5e6f816ac5b6747ef121bebf
- Today's Globe has a troubling article about the surge in calls to suicide call and text lines: <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/03/24/metro/amid-coronavirus-surge-calls-massachusetts-suicide-prevention-hotline/>

Even though we cannot be together, if you hear of a particularly moving story, someone doing

something inspired or innovative, or you have a question or concern that you think might be answered by one of our partners, feel free to send it along and I'll collect them and share in another e-mail, next week.

I wish you all continued health, for you and your loved ones.