

## Supporting Survivors' Access to Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Services During the COVID-19 Emergency

### ASK QUESTIONS



- **Ask service providers** about their emergency plan for maintaining access to essential treatment services during the current pandemic, both in the case of a survivor exhibiting symptoms, as well as in the case of the program needing to limit hours/services.
- **Ask survivors** what might happen if they have a delay in accessing services. What are some things that might help during a potential service disconnection? What are some potential risks they may face? Offer to brainstorm safety strategies and safe social supports.

### GET TECHY



- Offer assistance and resources for survivors to be able to **safely access expanding telehealth** options, including both telephone and video-based services.
- Expand access to **safe mobile devices and telehealth platforms**.
- **Advocate** with providers and local health dept.'s to prepare for continued safe access during the current emergency.

### MEDICATION ACCESS



- Support **continuous access** to prescribed medications.
- For people prescribed **buprenorphine (or suboxone)**, advocate that they receive a 30-day prescription.
- For people who access **methadone** services, advocate for 28-day take-home privileges. If they are not eligible, advocate for 14-day take-home, seek clarification on the requirements for 28-day take-home, and offer support and resources to help survivors meet requirements for 28-day privileges. States may need to apply for blanket exceptions from SAMHSA in order for treatment providers to increase take-home privileges.

## Supporting Survivors' Access to Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Services During the COVID-19 Emergency (cont.)

### COMMUNITY RECOVERY GROUPS



(12-Step, AA, SMART, etc.)

- Many communities are pausing or severely **limiting** their in-person recovery meetings.
- For people who want to access these, Advocates can:
  - Offer to help them safely access meetings and support resources **online or by phone**
  - Have accessible **informational materials** from the different recovery traditions available
  - Within shelters – if someone on staff or in the program is a member of one of these traditions, they could offer to **lead a recovery group** in their tradition

### OVERDOSE PREVENTION



- Risk of overdose can increase when someone is **disconnected** from treatment services and/or medications.
- **Illness** can also increase overdose risk.
- Help prevent fatal overdoses by:
  - Knowing the **signs** of overdose
  - Having **naloxone** (the opioid overdose antidote) accessible and helping survivors to access
  - Knowing how to **respond** to a potential overdose
  - **Talking with survivors** about how they are staying safe and preventing overdose
  - Having **agency procedures** on preventing and responding to overdose as well as training and support for staff

