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

- 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