



From the IIMHL and IIDL Update List

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**Rapid Review on Coronavirus/COVID-19:  
Policies, Actions and Resources related to  
Drug and Alcohol Addiction across IIMHL and IIDL countries**

**ISSUE 10 – 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2020**

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*“We immediately can recognize the unique challenges of COVID-19 for people having an addiction. Some of these are structural; the healthcare system is not prepared to take care of them. They relate also to stigma and social issues. The concept of social distancing makes such people even more vulnerable because it interferes with many of the support systems that can help them to reach recovery. And, on top of that, drugs themselves negatively influence human physiology, making one more vulnerable to getting infected and more vulnerable to worse outcomes”.<sup>1ii</sup>*

*“Social distancing, the primary preventive measure advised by the CDC, poses unique problems for people experiencing SUD and attempting to achieve or maintain long-term recovery. A common saying in this community is that the opposite of addiction isn’t sobriety, it’s CONNECTION”.*

*“People are starting to see that persistent social and economic inequality, persistent discrimination, persistent racism, and other kinds of destructive social hierarchies ultimately impede our ability to manage epidemics and pandemics and to promote good public health and mental health”*

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Nora Volkow, Director of NIH's National Institute on Drug Abuse  
<https://directorsblog.nih.gov/2020/04/21/coping-with-the-collision-of-public-health-crises-covid-19-and-substance-use-disorders/>

## Introduction

This briefing provides a broad overview of alcohol and other drug addiction policies, action, services and resources across IIMHL and IIDL countries. Under each country the issues that have been raised by their respective Governments or in the media are particularly highlighted.

We thank those people who sent information to us and hope that this briefing will assist Government and leaders in the addiction sector to learn from other countries.

## Top takeaways

- In general most international agencies and countries focus on mental health issues and alcohol problems as part of their COVID-19 responses (e.g. to the concerns provoked by the nature of the pandemic). There has been less focus on drug use in the COVID-19 world. Although it could be argued that many mental health solutions could also assist people who use drugs too.
- Some countries see people who use drugs and alcohol as a clear risk group for COVID-19 (e.g. Ireland<sup>iii</sup>). Others do not.
- Most countries have a huge amount of public information and harm reduction material for users and many research articles regarding drug use in the COVID-19 environment<sup>iv</sup>
- Most countries want drug use treated as a health issue rather than a justice issue. “*The war on drugs has not worked*” is often quoted.
- Drug use differs across countries. For example Australia and New Zealand have a big methamphetamine problem, while the US has an opioid crisis.
- As result of the pandemic, many countries are worried that the use of opioids such as fentanyl will rise if other drugs become harder to get.
- During this challenging time, innovations have been made in some countries. Examples include :
  - E-support has thrived - all countries have various degrees of online harm reduction and counselling services now as a result of COVID-19.
  - Scotland has an up-to-date excel spreadsheet of every drug and alcohol service available in the country, with daily changes made as things change in the COVID-19 environment.
  - The COVID-19 pandemic has strengthened collaboration among Government and non-governmental organisations (NGO) services in some countries; e.g. Scotland.
  - The Provincial Health Services Authority in Canada has expanded the role of the Provincial Overdose Mobile Response Team to looking after frontline staff in distress.

- It is important for agencies who offer support and treatment to update their websites regarding COVID-19 information given the dynamic nature of the current situation; and, it's important to put **dates** on website posts in this rapidly changing time.

## International Agencies

### United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

The United Nations Special Rapporteur made the following statement on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health:

*“In the current COVID-19 context, people who use drugs face unique needs and risks, due to criminalisation, stigma, discrimination, underlying health issues, social marginalisation and higher economic and social vulnerabilities, including a lack of access to adequate housing and healthcare. Treatment and harm reduction services should continue to be provided to them.”*

<https://www.talkingdrugs.org/un-experts-agree-%E2%80%93-the-right-to-health-of-people-who-use-drugs-must-be-prioritised-in-global-covid>

### 2019 UN World Drug Report

Improved research and more precise data have revealed that the adverse health consequences of drug use are more severe and widespread than previously thought. Globally, some 35 million people are estimated to suffer from drug use disorders and require treatment services, according to the latest World Drug Report.

The report also estimates the number of opioid users worldwide at 53 million, up 56 per cent from previous estimates, and that opioids are responsible for two thirds of the 585,000 people who died as a result of drug use in 2017. Globally, 11 million people injected drugs in 2017, of whom 1.4 million live with HIV and 5.6 million with hepatitis C.

North America's synthetic opioid overdose crisis also reached new heights in 2017, with more than 47,000 opioid overdose deaths recorded in the United States, an increase of 13 per cent from the previous year, and 4,000 opioid-related deaths in Canada, a 33 per cent increase from 2016.

Prevention and treatment continue to fall short in many parts of the world, with only one in seven people with drug use disorders receiving treatment each year.

[https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2019/June/world-drug-report-2019\\_-35-million-people-worldwide-suffer-from-drug-use-disorders-while-only-1-in-7-people-receive-treatment.html](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2019/June/world-drug-report-2019_-35-million-people-worldwide-suffer-from-drug-use-disorders-while-only-1-in-7-people-receive-treatment.html)

## World Health Organisation (WHO)

### **Alcohol & COVID-19: what you need to know**

The following factsheet provides important information that you should know about alcohol consumption and COVID-19. It addresses, among other things, the misinformation that is being spread through social media and other communication channels about alcohol and COVID-19. For example the myth that alcohol protects against COVID-19.

[http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/437608/Alcohol-and-COVID-19-what-you-need-to-know.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/437608/Alcohol-and-COVID-19-what-you-need-to-know.pdf)

## European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA)

### **EMCDDA launches COVID-19 special round of European Web Survey on Drugs to assess impact of pandemic 16/4/20**

Crucial information on the impact of COVID-19 on people who use drugs, and on the services that support them, will be collected via a special round of the [European Web Survey on Drugs](#), launched this week. The survey — the [Mini European Web Survey on Drugs: COVID-19](#) — is coordinated by the EMCDDA in collaboration with its [Reitox network](#) of national focal points.

The survey findings will contribute to the emerging knowledge base on COVID-19 and Europe's response to it, potentially helping to protect the health of people who use drugs, improve drug services and raise awareness of market changes.

[http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2020/emcdda-launches-covid-19-special-round-european-web-survey-drugs-assess-impact-pandemic\\_et](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2020/emcdda-launches-covid-19-special-round-european-web-survey-drugs-assess-impact-pandemic_et)

### **EMCDDA update on the implications of COVID-19 for people who use drugs**

Advice 25/3/20 People who use drugs, particularly Europe's ageing cohort of opioid users, may be particularly vulnerable to poor outcomes linked to pre-existing health problems and lifestyle factors. Some drug use behaviours, as well as poor socio-economic conditions and marginalisation, may also pose additional risks that are important to take into account. The EMCDDA notes in the update that some of the underlying chronic medical conditions experienced by some PWUD could increase the risk of developing severe illness, if infected with COVID-19. It also highlights the potentially greater risk of opioid-related deaths (if aggravated by breathing difficulties caused by COVID-19) and the prospect of problems linked to sharing drug using equipment (for inhalation, vaping, smoking or injecting).

<http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/12879/emcdda-covid-update-1-25.03.2020v2.pdf>

Covid-19 resources page

[http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2020/emcdda-publishes-update-on-the-implications-of-COVID-19-for-people-who-use-drugs-and-for-drug-service-providers\\_en](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/news/2020/emcdda-publishes-update-on-the-implications-of-COVID-19-for-people-who-use-drugs-and-for-drug-service-providers_en)

### European Commission

The European Commission is coordinating a common European response to the coronavirus outbreak. We are taking resolute action to reinforce our public health sectors and mitigate the socio-economic impact in the European Union. We are mobilising all means at our disposal to help our Member States coordinate their national responses and are providing objective information about the spread of the virus and effective efforts to contain it.

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/live-work-travel-eu/health/coronavirus-response_en)

**International Network of People who use Drugs (INPUD)** <https://www.inpud.net/>

INPUD is a global peer-based organisation that seeks to promote the health and defend the rights of people who use drugs. INPUD will expose and challenge stigma, discrimination, and the criminalisation of people who use drugs and its impact on the drug-using community's health and rights.

### **COVID-19 Harm Reduction for People Who Use Drugs**

<https://twitter.com/INPUD/status/1237732217914380290>

### Global Drug Survey (GDS)

*GDS Corona Conversations is a series of video interviews with experts around the world on how the current COVID19 pandemic is having an effect on people who use drugs. These experts include drug policy analysts, harm reduction workers, frontline health care professionals and people who use drugs.*

Global Drug Survey have produced practical videos of how to deal with various COVID19 related issues, including withdrawals as supply chains are also affected by the pandemic. The aim of GDS Corona Conversations is indeed this; to give a voice to health care workers, people who use drugs, policy makers, academics and harm reduction advocates around the world about how the current Covid19 pandemic is affecting their lives and the work they do.

<https://www.talkingdrugs.org/coronavirus-COVID-19-conversations-with-global-drug-survey>

## IIMHL Countries

### Australia

Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association Executive Officer Sam Biondo recently said that *“movement restrictions in place due to COVID-19 may increase small scale production of locally produced drugs like methamphetamine, as organised crime groups find it harder to move large quantities of drugs. Markets are quite elastic, they will change around and find a new level. One of things I’ve been concerned about is whether we are going to see an increase in home produced methamphetamine, and more laboratories over time,”* he said.

*“If we increase the amount of home production of drugs you are able to spread the consumption more widely, you also spread the harm, it avoids the controls imposed by Border Force and overseas police operations.”*

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/coronavirus-concerns-that-a-decrease-in-illicit-drugs-could-lead-to-even-more-harmful-substitutes>

### Australian Government

#### Ministers Department for Health

An additional \$6 million has been made available to support drug and alcohol services during COVID-19. Online and phone support services for people experiencing drug and alcohol problems will receive an additional \$6 million from the Australian Government during the COVID-19 pandemic. 24/4/20 by Minister for Health.

<https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/additional-6-million-to-support-drug-and-alcohol-services-during-covid-19>

#### Head to Health

This webpage gives lots of information on mental health support re COVID-19 not so much for people with addiction.

<https://dmhgprodsc9-cd.azurewebsites.net/covid-19-support/covid-19>

#### National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre

Professor Michael Farrell, said on 18/4/20 *“while it was too soon to notice any discernible trends in the drug market, there were particular concerns around what heroin users, in particular, might turn to other drugs such as the fentanyl might come in, in a way they haven’t so far.”*

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/coronavirus-concerns-that-a-decrease-in-illicit-drugs-could-lead-to-even-more-harmful-substitutes>

This agency is involved in a study looking at COVID-19 and drug taking behaviour.

ADAPT stands for Australians' Drug Use: Adapting to Pandemic Threats. The ADAPT study is exploring the short and long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the experiences of Australians who use illicit drugs.

*“The COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions imposed by governments to reduce transmission have likely generated unparalleled impacts on illicit drug markets, drug use patterns and related harms (e.g. fatal and non-fatal overdose, drug dependence and withdrawal). People who use drugs may also be particularly vulnerable to contracting COVID-19 due to underlying health issues, stigma, social marginalisation and higher economic and social vulnerabilities, including a lack of access to housing and health care. At the same time, treatment and harm reduction services are grappling with sustaining service delivery in the face of rising demand, restrictions on client contact, and redeployment of clinical staff.”*

<https://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/project/australians-drug-use-adapting-pandemic-threats-adapt-study>

## Queensland Health

### **COVID-19 - Telephone, Digital and Downloadable Tools for Remote AOD Service Delivery**

This toolkit contains mobile apps, interactive websites and downloadable worksheets that can be used to enhance telephone or online-based AOD counselling and treatment.

<https://insight.qld.edu.au/toolkits/online-and-telephone-based-treatment-resources/detail>

### **COVID-19 - Harm Reduction Advice for People Who Use Substances**

Insight and Adis Qld have assembled a factsheet containing basic harm reduction advice for clients / patients who drink and/or use drugs in Queensland. The resource draws advice from multiple harm reduction resources across Australia and the globe and is designed for distribution at NSPs, opioid clinics and treatment agencies.

<https://insight.qld.edu.au/shop/covid-19-coronavirus-harm-reduction-advice-for-aod>

### **Supporting Clients During COVID-19 - Tipsheet for AOD Workers**

Tip sheet for workers containing suggestions and strategies for supporting AOD clients during COVID-19 using a trauma-informed approach. Reproduced with permission from Metro North Mental Health - Alcohol and Drug Service.

<https://insight.qld.edu.au/shop/supporting-clients-during-covid-19-tips-for-alcohol-and-drug-workers>

## Alcohol and Drug Foundation

- As the social restrictions of the coronavirus pandemic unfold, the potential for harms associated with alcohol and other drugs may increase.
- Some people may find themselves drinking or using substances more to cope with anxiety, negativity, stress and our changing environment.

- To help people stay as safe as possible, you'll find a range of helpful information and links from this page.

<https://adf.org.au/covid-19/>

## Turning Point

This agency has information for people who use substances and also for agencies referring. For example:

*“As always we know practising harm minimisation e.g. using sterile equipment, managing dose etc. reduces the associated risks for people who use drugs and drink alcohol. With the increased risks presented by COVID-19 (it greatly affects respiratory function) it is additionally important that you look after yourself.”*

<https://www.turningpoint.org.au/covid-19-update>

## NUAA (NSW Users and AIDS Association)

NUAA has put together this resource to help you prevent the spread of COVID-19 while using drugs, and to help you plan ahead for social lockdown.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cc8ed0465019fb4eca08a46/t/5e86885a72767a40a3a30671/1585875035218/COVID19+a5+handout++THN+edit.pdf>

## Canada

### Government of Canada

#### Canada Self-Assessment Tool and App

##### Canada COVID-19 App with Daily Symptom Tracker

The app will support you to track your symptoms, receive the latest updates, and access trusted resources.

<https://ca.thrive.health/>

#### Wellness together

We recognize the significant strain that COVID-19 has placed on individuals and families across the country. Many people are concerned about their physical and mental well-being. Canadians are being challenged in a number of ways because of isolation, financial and employment uncertainty and disruptions to daily life. *Wellness Together Canada* provides tools and resources to help get Canadians back on track. These include modules for addressing low mood, worry, substance use, social isolation and relationship issues.

<https://ca.portal.gs/>

## Mental Health Commission Canada

### **Promising practices guide: Engaging caregivers in mental health and addiction services in Canada.**

The purpose of this Promising Practices Guide is to furnish MHA organizations with key considerations for family caregiver engagement, based on the best available evidence, and provide examples of good family engagement in care, programs, and policies.

[https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2020-04/Promising\\_Practices\\_Guide\\_eng.pdf](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2020-04/Promising_Practices_Guide_eng.pdf)

Coping with stress, anxiety and substance use (infographic)

<https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2020-04/CCSA-COVID-19-Coping-with-Stress-Anxiety-and-Substance-Use-Infographic-2020-en.pdf>

For providers

<https://www.ccsa.ca/managing-stress-anxiety-and-substance-use-during-covid-19-resource-healthcare-providers-infographic>

Social connection in the era of physical distance: fact sheet

[https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2020-04/social\\_isolation\\_fact\\_sheet\\_eng.pdf](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2020-04/social_isolation_fact_sheet_eng.pdf)

## Provincial Health Services Authority

### **Provincial Overdose Mobile Response Team**

The team offers psychosocial support, education, and training to organizations and agencies working within British Columbia's overdose public health emergency. This includes people impacted by critical incidents such as overdoses and/or overdose deaths during their work.

Innovation:

During our response to [COVID-19](#), the team's mandate has been expanded to support the mental wellbeing and psychological safety of frontline healthcare workers, specifically long-term care professionals and other community care providers, who are experiencing exponential distress and mental health concerns.

<http://www.phsa.ca/our-services/programs-services/health-emergency-management-bc/provincial-overdose-mobile-response-team>

## Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMHS)

These are extraordinary times and CAMH is committed to transparency and communication with the community that we serve. We will be providing regular daily updates on the status of people who have tested positive COVID-19 and actions that we're taking to keep staff and patients safe.

Like all hospitals, CAMH has extensive and detailed procedures in place for respiratory infection prevention and control. These are designed to ensure the health and safety of our staff, the community and those within our care.

<https://www.camh.ca/en/camh-news-and-stories/novel-coronavirus-update>

COVID-19, Alcohol & Cannabis use

[https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2020-04/CCSA-COVID-19-Alcohol-Cannabis-Use-Infographic-2020-en\\_1.pdf](https://www.ccsa.ca/sites/default/files/2020-04/CCSA-COVID-19-Alcohol-Cannabis-Use-Infographic-2020-en_1.pdf)

Safer drug use during the COVID-19 outbreak

<https://harmreduction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID19-safer-drug-use-1.pdf>

## BC Centre for Disease Control

COVID-19: Harm reduction and overdose response

<http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19-harm-reduction.pdf>

## England

### Parliament UK

#### **“A comprehensive response to drugs”**

This update to drug policy was published 23/10/19.

*“The first priority in developing a comprehensive response to drugs must be to improve existing drug treatment services, and extend and develop harm reduction initiatives. The Government needs to develop and fund a comprehensive package of education, prevention and support measures focused on prevention of drug use amongst young people.*

*A comprehensive response should also include a focus on improving the life chances of people who are recovering from drug use. To do this, the Government should actively consider the re-establishment of a central drugs policy agency, drawing on lessons from both the Drug Treatment Agency and the Portuguese experience of SICAD (the central Directorate-General for Intervention on Addictive Behaviours and Dependencies).*

*As well as funding and directing drug treatment services, it could play an important role in co-ordinating the multiple strands of drug policy, including policing, social care, education, housing and employment, and developing a truly joined-up, cross Governmental approach to drugs.*

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201919/cmselect/cmhealth/143/14306.htm#idTextAnchor024>

## The Guardian Newspaper - UK

Last week the *Guardian UK* reported that border guards had noticed a decrease in drug seizures at the UK border and that local police had also seen a decrease on the streets. But experts have warned that fewer drugs on the streets is not as positive as it sounds, as users are already turning to high-strength alternatives such as benzodiazepines, while there is a significant risk of heroin users substituting with fentanyl, a lethal drug 50 to 100 times stronger than heroin.

Dr Rachel Britton, the director of pharmacy at the drug, alcohol and mental health charity We Are With You, which runs 80 drug treatment services across England and Scotland, said: *"We are receiving reports that the coronavirus is affecting the supply of illicit drugs."*

*"While less drugs on the street may seem like a good thing, what replaces them is usually more dangerous. We know the purity of many drugs is decreasing as dealers cut them with different substances to increase their bulk. This means people often don't know what they are taking, increasing the chance of overdose."*

Niamh Eastwood, the executive director of the drugs charity Release, on what is going on in the drugs market in light of the coronavirus, said: *"One significant concern is the arrival of fentanyl which would be devastating. This drug has been linked to the overdose crisis in the US and Canada, but so far the UK has largely been spared. However, even with the absence of fentanyl, the UK already has record levels of drug deaths. If fentanyl or any of its analogues were to start to appear this would be catastrophic."*

Ian Hamilton, senior lecturer in addiction and mental health at the University of York, said: *"The problem with fentanyl is it has wreaked havoc in North America because it's estimated to be between 50 to 100 times stronger than heroin. Pre-Covid we've not had anything like the problems North America has had but the consensus is that it's only a matter of time – and Covid could be the crisis that triggers that."*

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/12/coronavirus-triggers-uk-shortage-of-illicit-drugs>

## GOV.UK

### **COVID-19: guidance for commissioners and providers of services for people who use drugs or alcohol 15/4/10**

- drug and alcohol services do not need to close at the current time and are important to keep operating as they protect vulnerable people who are at greater risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) and help reduce the burden on other healthcare services

- services should keep face-to-face contacts between staff and service users to a minimum and minimise the use of biological drug testing and breathalysers, where safe to do so
- follow up-to-date guidance for infection prevention and control, including hand-washing, surface-cleaning, isolating people and sending staff home

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-commissioners-and-providers-of-services-for-people-who-use-drugs-or-alcohol/covid-19-guidance-for-commissioners-and-providers-of-services-for-people-who-use-drugs-or-alcohol>

### Letter from the Home Secretary to the Chair of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs

COVID-19: emergency legislation to enable supply of controlled drugs.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-to-the-acmd-on-emergency-legislation-to-enable-the-supply-of-controlled-drugs/letter-from-the-home-secretary-to-the-chair-of-the-advisory-council-on-the-misuse-of-drugs>

### National Health Services

#### Advice for health and justice healthcare teams on medicines and pharmacy services continuity (NHS, UK)

This UK guidance describes the changes that may be needed to provide continuity of medicines during an outbreak. It includes advice on access to community services for people released from prison needing continued Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST).

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2020/03/C0090-guidance-for-medicines-and-pharmacy-service-continuity-in-HJ-services-270320.pdf>

### Royal College of Psychiatrists

#### COVID-19: Working with vulnerable people

Find out more about specific considerations that need to be made when working with more vulnerable patients, such as older people or **those who use drugs**.

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/about-us/responding-to-covid-19/responding-to-covid-19-guidance-for-clinicians/community-and-inpatient-services/covid-19-working-with-vulnerable-patients>

### Public Health England

Public Health England has asked frontline agencies to alert them to examples of drug substitution or contaminated products.

Given this is a 'market' without any quality control or regulation, in which consumers have no idea of the strength of their drug from dose to dose or which chemicals they are exposing themselves to. Mirroring the lack of testing for COVID-19, there's no routine testing for drugs in the UK.

<https://theconversation.com/how-coronavirus-is-changing-the-market-for-illegal-drugs-134753>

### **Every mind matters**

This campaign was launched to help people with mental health issues.  
*"Every Mind Matters campaign will be supported through social media, digital, national TV and partner support activity, helping to reach the audiences most at-risk of poor mental health".*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/covid-19-mental-health-campaign-launches>

### **Drink & Drugs News**

Information, advice, and useful resources on coronavirus for treatment services, service users, and people who use drugs.

<https://drinkanddrugsnews.com/coronavirus-advice/>

Substance misuse staff eligible for testing 20/4/20

<https://drinkanddrugsnews.com/substance-misuse-staff-eligible-for-testing/>

### **Narcotics Anonymous**

For everyone who cannot attend meetings in person, Narcotics Anonymous have virtual meetings online. No registration is required and it is totally anonymous. Online meetings every day at 11.00am and 7.30pm London time.

<https://online.ukna.org/>

### **We Are With You**

This agency gives instructions on how to safely detox from alcohol at home as the COVID-19

*"Normally, we'd recommend getting professional support before you try to cut down your drinking. But while the coronavirus situation continues, that might not be possible. That's why we have come up with this advice on safely detoxing from alcohol at home. Make sure you read and follow the advice carefully, and always be prepared to call an ambulance in an emergency".*

<https://www.wearewithyou.org.uk/help-and-advice/advice-you/how-safely-detox-alcohol-home/>

## Release

Release and [Transform](#) are both charities working on issues that impact people who use drugs, including those who are drug dependent and those in treatment for this condition. This briefing has also been informed by clinical leads and experts from the drug treatment sector including [Change Grow Live](#) and [Humankind](#). This submission is also supported by [Harm Reduction International](#) and [Recovering Justice](#).

Release says it understands that the priority for the UK Parliament Treasury Committee is to reduce, as far as is possible, the impact of COVID-19 on the community at large, and to ‘flatten the curve’ of infections to prevent the healthcare system from being overwhelmed. Protecting those who use drugs is vital for this wider effort to protect society as a whole.

They urge the Committee to understand that a failure to increase support and adapt policy to help people who use drugs problematically will disproportionately impact on healthcare capacity nationwide. The vast majority of the 320,000 people who are drug dependent are liable to be more vulnerable to both infection and the worst impacts of the virus. Failure to protect this group will lead to vastly increased pressure on the NHS that costs far more both financially, and in lives lost, than the investment in treatment and the other support suggested in this document would. Fourteen recommendations are made.

<https://www.talkingdrugs.org/coronavirus-covid-19-policy-recommendations-to-protect-people-who-use-drugs-in-the-uk>

## Ireland

### Government Policy

#### **Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery - A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025**

This is the national policy document for Ireland

[http://www.drugs.ie/downloadDocs/2017/ReducingHarmSupportingRecovery2017\\_2025.pdf](http://www.drugs.ie/downloadDocs/2017/ReducingHarmSupportingRecovery2017_2025.pdf)

### Health Service Executive

Nicola Corrigan (National Social Inclusion Office) HSE said in an email on 27/4/20:

*“We have seen huge partnership work with statutory services and the community and voluntary services all around the country. An early focus in our preparation was to clear people from the OST waiting list and to ensure new people who wanted treatment were able to access that despite the travel and service restrictions”.*

## **Guidance on Contingency Planning for People who use Drugs and COVID-19**

*“Developed by the HSE for anyone who is working with people who use drugs (PWUD) including those on OST. COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving pandemic with national advice and guidance updated regularly. This document is accurate at the point of publication and will be reviewed and updated regularly”.*

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/other-areas/health-inequalities/contingency-planning-for-people-who-use-drugs.pdf>

## **DRUGS.ie Drug & Alcohol Information & Support Ireland**

Dual Diagnosis’ or ‘Comorbidity’ are terms used when a person is diagnosed with one or more conditions. When referring to these terms in relation to people who use drugs, it means that the person is using a substance (s) and also experiences a mental health issue.

The relationship between substance use and mental health is complex and can mean additional difficulties for both the person and their families. These issues may be worsened by external stresses during periods of crisis, making the COVID-19 outbreak an even more difficult time.

[http://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/dual\\_diagnosis/](http://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/dual_diagnosis/)

Comprehensive list of addiction support services nation-wide which are operational during COVID-19 pandemic.

[http://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/drug\\_services\\_during\\_covid\\_19/](http://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/drug_services_during_covid_19/)

Why people who use drugs are at risk during COVID-19.

[http://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/why\\_people\\_who\\_use\\_drugs\\_are\\_at\\_risk\\_during\\_covid\\_19/](http://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/why_people_who_use_drugs_are_at_risk_during_covid_19/)

[Example Standard Operating Procedure for emergency induction of OST](#). An example of a Standard Operating Procedure for the emergency induction of Opioid Substitution Therapy based on the Guidance on Contingency Planning for People who use drugs and COVID-19

[Medicines Management policy](#) to support the management of individuals with a history of addiction who have to enter self-isolation units.

National Drug Treatment Centre Standard Operating Procedure for [dispensing medication for clients in isolation](#) during COVID-19 from pharmacy

Guidance for Addiction Services on [remote consultations](#)

PSI, Medical Council and the HSE Guidance in relation to the recent legislative changes introduced to facilitate the [safe supply of medicines during the Covid-19 pandemic](#)

[Methadone take-home leaflet](#) A revised version of the National Drug Treatment Centre methadone take-home leaflet

[Needle Exchange Provision](#) Guidance on planning for needle exchange provision during COVID-19

[Overdose awareness information](#) for staff Information on who are at risk from overdose during COVID-19 and advice for informing clients on the risks

[Guidance document for Homeless and Vulnerable Groups](#) gives general advice about preventing the spread of COVID-19 in settings for vulnerable groups, such as Homeless, Travellers, refugees/asylum seekers and others. The measures outlined are mainly focused on congregate settings or facilities managed by staff and can be applied in direct provision centres, hostels, hubs or residential settings including those without clinic or in-house nursing, medical or healthcare support.

Coronavirus – Drug advice: Poster

[http://drugs.ie/images/uploads/drug\\_advice.png](http://drugs.ie/images/uploads/drug_advice.png)

Coronavirus harm reduction for people who use drugs: Poster

[http://drugs.ie/images/uploads/Harm\\_reduction\\_PNG.png](http://drugs.ie/images/uploads/Harm_reduction_PNG.png)

Overdose awareness during the coronavirus

[http://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/overdose\\_awareness\\_during\\_covid\\_19\\_pandemic/](http://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/overdose_awareness_during_covid_19_pandemic/)

Homelessness and addiction

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/primarycare/socialinclusion/homelessness-and-addiction/covid-19-sharing-resources-homeless.html>

**FourFour mag:**

FourFour mag work closely with the Health Service Executive (HSE) in order to find the best ways to approach important topics such as harm reduction and safety, this includes with drug use. They have provided the following information and we believe it is crucial you follow their guidelines. They are asking people to take extra care if they plan to go out and use drugs during this time. The safest thing to do is not take drugs at all but we understand that people may still choose to use anyway.

<https://fourfourmag.com/drug-harm-reduction-information-in-light-of-coronavirus/>

**UISCE (The Union for Improved Services and Communication for people who use drugs)**

This organisation has released an updated overdose awareness poster to be used during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

[http://www.drugs.ie/news/article/new\\_uisce\\_poster\\_for\\_people\\_who\\_use\\_drugs](http://www.drugs.ie/news/article/new_uisce_poster_for_people_who_use_drugs)

## New Zealand/Aotearoa

### Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health's group manager of addiction Richard Taylor said it has provided clear guidance to the sector that alcohol and drug addiction services have been identified as [essential services](#) during this period.

*"This means that there is an expectation that as much as possible and practical services are available for those that need them while the country is at Covid-19 alert level 4."*

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/121042273/coronavirus-salvation-army-addiction-treatment-services-under-pressure>

Personal protective equipment (PPE) used by community pharmacy for prevention of COVID-19 Includes providing opioid substitution treatment services (OST).

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/ppe-used-community-pharmacy-prevention-covid-19-8apr20.pdf>

### Support for mental wellbeing

The Ministry of Health has supported access to several mental health “apps” to assist with mental health. For example:

- [mentemia.com/](http://mentemia.com/)
- [melonhealth.com/covid-19](http://melonhealth.com/covid-19)
- [justathought.co.nz/covid19](http://justathought.co.nz/covid19) for *Staying on Track*

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/apps-e-therapy-offer-practical-mental-health-support#navbar>

- Getting through together: [www.allright.org.nz/campaigns/getting-through-together](http://www.allright.org.nz/campaigns/getting-through-together)
- Sparklers at home: [www.sparklers.org.nz/parenting](http://www.sparklers.org.nz/parenting)

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/covid-19-mental-health-support-begins>

These may also assist those with addiction to some extent.

### NZ Drug Foundation (NZDF)

Data published today in the NZ Drug Foundation's State of the Nation 2019 report shows that last year low-level methamphetamine convictions overtook cannabis for the first time. Cannabis-related convictions have remained stable while those for methamphetamine have continued to rise.

<https://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/news-media-and-events/methamphetamine-convictions-on-rise/>

For more information visit [covid19.govt.nz](https://covid19.govt.nz), visit [external website](#)

“The impacts of alcohol and drug use on ourselves and others are different while we are at home in lockdown. We want to avoid overloading our health services and police with extra work. This may also be an opportunity to think about taking a break from alcohol and other drugs. If you or someone in your household decides to use alcohol or other drugs, or change their use during this period, look at this information on how to stay safer, manage withdrawal symptoms, maintain recovery and support others.”

<https://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/covid-19/>

From Ross Bell Executive Director NZDF: “*The punitive approach to drugs New Zealand has pursued for almost 50 years has created more harm than good. This new report shows us a way to begin healing from decades of harmful drug law.*”

“...*Too many New Zealanders have their lives scarred through the criminal justice system, when a health intervention was needed. Māori have borne the brunt of the failed criminal justice approach. This report gives us a way out.*”

<https://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/news-media-and-events/treat-drugs-as-a-health-issue-justice-sector-review/>

Alcohol and other drug withdrawal symptoms

<https://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/covid-19/>

Methamphetamine help

<https://drughelp.org.nz/a-bit-about-drugs/meth>

**The NZDF has good resources from other countries for drug and alcohol issues during the pandemic:**

Safer Drug Use During the COVID-19 Outbreak

<https://harmreduction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID19-safer-drug-use-1.pdf>

Syringe Services and Harm Reduction Provider Operations During the COVID-19 Outbreak

<https://harmreduction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID19-harm-reduction-providers-1.pdf>

EMCDDA update on the implications of COVID-19 for people who use drugs (PWUD) and drug service providers

<http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/12879/emcdda-covid-update-1-25.03.2020v2.pdf>

Covid-19 and harm reduction

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cc8ed0465019fb4eca08a46/t/5e86885a72767a40a3a30671/1585875035218/COVID19+a5+handout++THN+edit.pdf>

COVID-19 & Harm reduction: Harm reduction advice for people who drink alcohol or use drugs

<https://insight.qld.edu.au/shop/covid-19-coronavirus-harm-reduction-advice-for-aod>

## Health Promotion Agency

### The impact of lockdown on health risk behaviours

Key results from a survey of alcohol, tobacco and gambling use during the COVID-19 Level 4 lockdown.

- Generally, for the people who drink, 1 in 3 are reporting they are drinking less in lockdown than before – are in particular for Māori, Pacifica and young people
- But the flip side is that 1 in 5 are drinking more – and that’s concerning for those groups that are more likely to be heavy drinkers – Māori, Pacifica and young people
- 1 in 3 people are also smoking and gambling less and half of gamblers are gambling less
- Reduced opportunities to socialise, reduced access and cost pressures are driving the decline across these areas
- 1 in 11 are gambling more and this increase in gambling is most evident among Māori and young people, who also report high levels of online gambling.

<https://www.hpa.org.nz/research-library/research-publications/the-impact-of-lockdown-on-health-risk-behaviours>

### Best Bubble “*Be the best bubble you can be*” in the COVID-19 world.

This is a new fun social marketing campaign, taking a positive message of reduced alcohol use and positive action to pass on to our bubbles around the country. They are encouraging all to please check it out, follow it and like it on FB and Instagram.

“During lockdown, our bubbles have become our worlds. We’re inside leading new bubble lives with our bubble people and our bubble pets. We’re making bubble meals, holding bubble chats, and having bubble feelings”.

<https://www.bestbubble.co.nz/>

## The Salvation Army

This agency says its residential alcohol and drug treatment service is struggling because detox programmes run by the District Health Boards (DHBs) have been shut during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Its national director of addiction services, Lynette Hutson, said it normally has the capacity for 175 clients in its [residential programme](#) nationwide at any one time, but it has been running at 50 per cent since the lockdown came into effect.

"We know there are people out there in the community who need support. And we want those people in the community to know there is support here," Hutson said. "But all the detox services we need people to do before they can come into one of our residential treatment programmes have been shut down."

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/121042273/coronavirus-salvation-army-addiction-treatment-services-under-pressure>

## Scotland

### Scottish Government Population Health Directorate

#### **Drug Deaths Taskforce: COVID-19 Recommendations– 16 April 2020**

Reducing Harms and Deaths Amongst People Who Use Drugs During COVID-19 Pandemic

- The following are a number of key Issues/recommendations from the Drug Death Taskforce to the Minister for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing to mitigate harms from COVID-19-related service disruption and decline in the context of the existing drug-related deaths crisis.
- Write to Health Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships to highlight the importance of maintaining service-level provision of drug and alcohol services during the Covid-19 outbreak and to plan for additional capacity to these services on the basis of public health surveillance.
- Protect harm reduction and treatment staff from redeployment to ensure workforce capacity for injecting equipment provision (IEP), opioid substitution therapy (OST) and take-home naloxone (THN) delivery and ensure non-fatal overdose follow-up pathways are maintained. These services add value to necessary COVID-19 response measures as well as mitigate unintended consequences, and so prevent additional burden on the NHS.
- Consider people who use drugs (PWUD) as a priority group
- This would ensure they receive COVID-19 testing, in particular those who are homeless/in prison/prisoners on release etc.
- Extend inclusion criteria for Scottish Government national helpline (0800 111 4000) for vulnerable people to include PWUD.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/drug-deaths-taskforce-covid-19-recommendations-16-april-2020/>

### Scottish Drugs Forum

#### **Guidance on contingency planning for people who use drugs and COVID-19 19/4/20**

This 11-page document is for anyone who is working with people who use drugs (PWUD) but in particular those working with people on opioid substitution therapy (OST) and those working with people attending services to obtain injecting equipment.

[https://mcusercontent.com/e11f8fc83cbbb714881d3030b/files/a7e79d4d-4e3d-458a-b54c-e0d82ca34877/Guidelines\\_on\\_contingency\\_planning\\_for\\_people\\_who\\_use\\_drugs\\_and\\_COVID\\_19\\_Version\\_1.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/e11f8fc83cbbb714881d3030b/files/a7e79d4d-4e3d-458a-b54c-e0d82ca34877/Guidelines_on_contingency_planning_for_people_who_use_drugs_and_COVID_19_Version_1.pdf)

## **COVID-19 resources for Scotland**

This has a wide range of resources

<http://www.sdf.org.uk/covid-19/covid-19-resources/>

## **Services Database excel spreadsheet**

This offers up-to-date information about all services for drug users in Scotland with what, who, where, when and information about any changes in the COVID-19 environment. An example below is for the city of Glasgow.

Andrew Horne, Executive Director of We Are With You, said:

*“It has been a real team effort to create a map of all Scotland’s drug and alcohol services’ revised arrangements during the Covid-19 lockdown. People can now see, at the click of a button, which services are being delivered across the country. “Whether it’s new arrangements for emergency 1-1 support, or injecting equipment delivery services, people can get accurate information from a central source. We can all get through these times if we work together and look out for each other.”*

The database can be viewed via a spreadsheet or can be accessed as a map.

[https://sdforum-my.sharepoint.com/:x/g/person/lesleyb\\_sdf\\_org\\_uk/Edm9aV\\_aBhZBug0zzMkOcRUBTUBWvZgXsYpv28GMFmluCA?rttime=4VDsCdnq10g](https://sdforum-my.sharepoint.com/:x/g/person/lesleyb_sdf_org_uk/Edm9aV_aBhZBug0zzMkOcRUBTUBWvZgXsYpv28GMFmluCA?rttime=4VDsCdnq10g)

Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) have suspended their Heroin Assisted Treatment programme which started in November 2019.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-50563163>

*“The programme is a highly specialised clinical intervention in which diamorphine is prescribed for the treatment of heroin addiction. It can only be undertaken by doctors with a licence allowing them to prescribe the medication. Heroin dependent patients aged 18 and over, with previous unsuccessful treatment episodes, would be eligible for the service. It is already legal in the UK and has been trialled in London, Darlington and Brighton, and is already widely used in Germany, Belgium and Switzerland”.*  
Safer drug consumption facilities and heroin-assisted treatment

<https://www.glasgow.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=38604&p=0>

## **Do You Inject Drugs?**

This leaflet tells you how to protect yourself and others

<http://www.sdf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID-19-Drug-injecting-A5-Flyer-Digital.pdf>

### **“Let’s give bacteria the boot”**

This is a 2-page graphic aimed at reducing infection among drug users.

<http://www.sdf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/SDF-Give-bacteria-the-boot-Booklet-Digital.pdf>

### **Advice for people who use drugs**

<http://www.sdf.org.uk/covid-19/advice-for-people-who-use-drugs/>

## **CREW**

### **Coronavirus: General hygiene harm reduction tips 3/4/20**

This website notes that AA, Narcotics Anonymous and Cocaine Anonymous all have online support options.

<https://www.crew.scot/coronavirus-general-hygiene-tips/>

## **Hard Edges Scotland report**

Noted three common routes to addiction identified in the [Hard Edges Scotland](#) research as childhood trauma, a traumatic event in later life or a clinical pathway through painkillers or medication.

<https://lankellychase.org.uk/resources/publications/hard-edges-scotland/>

## **Sweden**

### **International Doctors for Healthier Drug Policies**

Sweden currently [has one of the highest rates](#) of drug-related deaths in Europe, with 87.8 such deaths per million people recorded in 2016 – the vast majority of which involved opioids, such as heroin. This rate is more than four times the EU average of 21.8 deaths per million people.

In addition to opioids, [an increasing number](#) of deaths in the country has been attributed to cocaine.

The Swedish government says its strict legislation is aimed at reducing drug use, but that may be on the rise too. Recent government data indicates a [slight rise](#) in cannabis use among young people, while “ecstasy” (MDMA) use is also on the increase – [according to](#) Swedish publication, *The Local*.

Under the Penal Law on Narcotics – the backbone of Swedish drug policy - possession of drugs for personal use continues to be criminalised, and can be punished by a fine or prison sentence. The country's national broadcaster, SVT,

found that [a majority of political parties](#) in the government's Committee on Health and Welfare now supports re-evaluating this approach.

<https://idhdp.com/en/resources/news/may-2019/calls-for-drug-law-reform-in-sweden-as-drug-deaths-continue-unabated.aspx>

## 29K

29k is a non-profit organisation and community on a mission to make personal growth available for everyone, for free. While it doesn't focus on addiction it could be seen as useful in that area too.

*"Personal growth through an app? Not really. Achieving personal growth is in fact not an entirely individual process. The science behind why the 29k programs work is because you will be sharing your experience with other people. This process makes you help others, as much as they help you".*

<https://29k.org/>

*"On average, we have 29 000 days to live on planet earth. Our purpose is to support as many people as possible to make their days count."*

Based in Stockholm, Sweden, 29k is a non-profit co-owned by two foundations, Norrskan Foundation and Ekskäret Foundation. Working with leading researchers and scientists from Harvard University and the Karolinska institute. We are joined by philanthropists, foundations and companies that share our values and want to support our ambition.

<https://29k.org/about>

## The Netherlands

The President of the House of Representatives of the States General, Hague.

This 41-page document gives an update on all issues related to COVID-19 as at 7/4/20

<https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=nl&u=https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/kamerstukken/2020/04/07/kamerbrief-over-stand-van-zaken-covid-19/Kamerbrief%2BCOVID-19%2Bstand%2Bvan%2Bzaken.pdf&prev=search>

## Rural Update on Harm reduction and Coronavirus 3/4/20

Mainline Foundation, MDHG and Trimbos Institute

This four-page document outlines measure for people who use drugs

<https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=nl&u=https://www.trimbos.nl/docs/9a69245b-0233-4551-8c86-ae976988b2f8.pdf&prev=search>

Alcohol, smoking & drugs & mental health & coronavirus

<https://www.trimbos.nl/kennis/corona>

The latest version of the COVID-19 Guideline for the mental health and addiction services.

<https://www.ggzstandaarden.nl/richtlijnen/ggz-en-corona-richtlijn/inleiding>

### Addiction Science Netherlands

*“The current time in which we live is exceptional, for everyone. Addiction care institutions make every effort to ensure that care continues. We want to remain available to everyone who needs it. Although the measures hinder the work of addiction care somewhat, advice and help can continue to be provided. Although that is in a different, adapted way. Addiction treatments for which people normally come to locations now take place remotely, where possible, via internet treatment, video calling and digital intakes. New recordings also take place where possible. The current physical state of health of the client is first considered. Many institutions have set up separate help lines where you can ask questions, get advice.*

*In addition to this digital deployment, medical, clinical and residential care will continue physically as much as possible. With due observance of the RIVM rules with regard to safety for clients and employees. The treatment of people in a compulsory framework, for example through the judiciary, will continue as much as possible in an adapted form”.*

<https://www.verslavingskundenederland.nl/>

### Media attention in the Netherlands

There has been some attention for the "silent addiction" during the corona crisis in the media:

- <https://triora.nl/actueel/nieuws/een-stille-verslaving-tijdens-corona>
- <https://www.rtvutrecht.nl/nieuws/2034784/stille-verslaafde-kan-door-corona-weggliden.html>
- <https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/813647299/coronatijd-extra-riskant-voor-stille-verslaafde>
- <https://www.nporadio1.nl/binnenland/22910-door-coronacrisis-meer-kans-op-alcoholverslavinge>

## US

### SAMHSA

#### **Training and Technical Assistance Related to COVID-19**

SAMHSA lists documents and training available to assist in the COVID-19 environment and this includes substance abuse issues.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/training-and-technical-assistance-covid19.pdf>

#### **FAQs: Provision of methadone and buprenorphine for the treatment of Opioid Use Disorder in the COVID-19 emergency**

This document gives new prescribing and practising policies for addiction providers. It focuses on the provision of methadone and buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD) during the COVID-19 emergency. The document addresses laws and regulations around treating new and existing patients and summarizes a slew of recent policy changes that will remain in effect through the course of the COVID-19 emergency.

[https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/faqs-for-oud-prescribing-and-dispensing.pdf?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=socialmedia&utm\\_campaign=covid19](https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/faqs-for-oud-prescribing-and-dispensing.pdf?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=socialmedia&utm_campaign=covid19)

#### **Considerations for Crisis Centers and Clinicians in Managing the Treatment of Alcohol or Benzodiazepine Withdrawal during the COVID-19 Epidemic: March 19, 2020**

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/considerations-crisis-centers-clinicians-treatment-alcohol-benzodiazepine-withdrawal.pdf>

#### **Virtual Recovery Resources**

In an infectious disease outbreak, when social distancing and self-quarantine are needed to limit and control the spread of the disease, continued social connectedness to maintain recovery are critically important. Virtual resources can and should be used during this time. This tip sheet describes resources that can be used to virtually support recovery from mental/substance use disorders. It also provides resources to help local recovery programs create virtual meetings.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/virtual-recovery-resources.pdf>

#### **The Opioid Crisis and the Black/African American Population: An Urgent Issue**

This issue brief presents recent data on prevalence of opioid misuse and death rates in the Black/AA population; contextual factors & challenges to prevention & treatment; innovative outreach & engagement strategies to connect people to evidence-based treatment; and the importance of community voice. March 2020.

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/The-Opioid-Crisis-and-the-Black-African-American-Population-An-Urgent-Issue/PEP20-05-02-001>

### National Institute on Drug Abuse

***“We had not yet been able to contain the epidemic of opioid fatalities, and then we were hit by this tsunami of COVID”.***

In the US opioids have been a serious issue in the last few years. Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone (OxyContin<sup>®</sup>), hydrocodone (Vicodin<sup>®</sup>), codeine, morphine, and many others

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids#summary-of-the-issue>

### American Psychological Association

Although there is not a complete national picture, data from a few states and cities are showing that the COVID-19 virus is disproportionately infecting and killing African-Americans. In Illinois, for example, African-Americans comprise 43% of people who have died from the disease and 28% have positive tests, even though they're only 15% of the state's population. Similarly, in Detroit, Milwaukee, North Carolina, Connecticut, South Carolina, African-Americans are disproportionately at risk. Why is this so? What can be done to alleviate these skewed proportions while working together to flatten the curve and beat back this pandemic?

People are starting to see that persistent social and economic inequality, persistent discrimination, persistent racism, and other kinds of destructive social hierarchies ultimately impede our ability to manage epidemics and pandemics and to promote good public health and mental health. Sadly, as tragic as this pandemic has been, part of what it is signalling to the country is that our fates are deeply intertwined, and we ignore the needs of our most vulnerable communities at our own peril.

<https://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/african-americans-latinos-covid-19>

### Yale Program in Addiction Medicine, Global Health Justice Partnership, and Crackdown.

Guidance for People Who Use Substances on COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus)

<https://yale.app.box.com/v/COVID19HarmReductionGuidance>

### American Society of Addiction Medicine

This agency has a number of resources, for example:

Ensuring Access to Care in Opioid Treatment Programs

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is presenting significant challenges for opioid treatment programs as they seek to continue to provide quality addiction treatment

while minimizing patient, staff, and community risk for COVID-19. This resource is intended to provide guidance on the issues that OTPs should consider as they navigate the COVID-19 crisis.

<https://www.asam.org/Quality-Science/covid-19-coronavirus>

### Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)

There are many resources particularly on opioid addiction:  
For people struggling with opioid addiction, it is important to provide treatment, as well as a way to prevent overdose death. Here are some resources that may help.

<https://www.cdc.gov/rxawareness/treatment/index.html>

There is a webpage devoted to opioid overdose – a big issue in the US.

<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/>

### Addiction Policy Forum

Public message video is aimed at individuals with a substance use disorder to bring awareness to their risk of COVID-19 complications. 20/4/20

<https://www.addictionpolicy.org/a-message-from-gramma>

Health officials warn that those struggling with an addiction – particularly opioid and methamphetamine use disorders – and those who smoke or vape nicotine or marijuana may be more vulnerable than others to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 and to developing more severe symptoms. COVID-19 attacks the respiratory tract and can lead to serious complications, such as pneumonia and respiratory failure.

[\*A Message From Gramma\*](#) campaign and PSA is part of a larger effort by the Addiction Policy Forum to help patients and families struggling with addiction be aware of the risks and how to take extra precautions during the pandemic.

The Addiction Policy Forum launched a national document on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020 advising:

#### **”Individuals with substance use disorder to take preventive actions during the coronavirus pandemic”**

“Use of methamphetamine, cocaine, and synthetic opioids like fentanyl are continuing to increase. While heroin availability has decreased in some large cities, fentanyl has not decreased at all. Relapses, slips, naloxone availability, and overdoses are a major concern at this time when access to EMTs, Emergency Rooms, Academic and General Hospitals are reduced due to COVID 19.

Occasional substance users are drinking and using more drugs, patients with OUDs are wondering whether they need to take their MATs, patients in stable remissions

are slipping as face-to-face support and recovery programs have moved online. Anxiety, loneliness, social isolation, lack of support, nihilism, depression, and despair multiply these effects,” further explains Dr Mark Gold.

<https://www.addictionpolicy.org/post/what-people-with-a-substance-use-disorder-need-to-know-about-covid-19>

## 7cups

This is an international online application that assist mainly in emotional well-being, but it also has an addiction focus.

[Alcohol use](#)

[Drug abuse](#)

[Family members/friends of people with addiction](#)

[Gambling addiction](#)

<https://www.7cups.com/qa-alcohol-drug-use-22/>

7 Cups is an on-demand emotional health service and online therapy provider. Our bridging technology anonymously and securely connects real people to real listeners in one-on-one chat.

Anyone who wants to talk about whatever is on their mind can quickly reach out to a trained, compassionate listener through our network. We have hundreds of listeners who come from all walks of life and have diverse experiences.

People connect with listeners on 7 Cups for all kinds of reasons, from big existential thoughts to small, day-to-day things that we all experience. Unlike talking to family or friends, a 7 Cups listener doesn't judge or try to solve problems and say what to do. Our listeners just listen. They understand. They give you the space you need to help you clear your head.

<https://www.7cups.com/about/>

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.apa.org/research/action/speaking-of-psychology/african-americans-latinos-covid-19>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://directorsblog.nih.gov/2020/04/21/coping-with-the-collision-of-public-health-crises-covid-19-and-substance-use-disorders/>

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/why\\_people\\_who\\_use\\_drugs\\_are\\_at\\_risk\\_during\\_covid\\_19/](http://www.drugs.ie/resources/covid/why_people_who_use_drugs_are_at_risk_during_covid_19/)

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31758/>