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## Brevard County Opioid Misuse Task Force Brevard County Opioid Misuse Abatement Plan

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**Summary:** Given the overlap of the COVID-19 pandemic with the opioid epidemic, accompanied by the societal issues of stimulants misuse and vaping, there is a great need for more community capacity to effectively prevent substance use before it starts while effectively addressing the needs of those currently with opioid use disorder (OUD). Accordingly, there is also an increased need to address the intensified negative impacts of substance misuse, addiction, and erosion of socioemotional health resulting from COVID-19. Considering this, Brevard Prevention Coalition is grateful for the opportunity to propose the below abatement plan as part of Brevard County Government's coordinated effort to address the opioid crisis. Brevard Prevention Coalition is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that operates Brevard County's opioid misuse task force. Local and state agencies and community members are active members of the coalition and its opioid misuse task force initiative, including Brevard County Government, State of Florida Department of Children & Families, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Florida Department of Health in Brevard County, Brevard Public Schools, local law enforcement, the local hospital systems, clinics, substance use disorder (SUD) treatment providers, as well as a host of social services and substance misuse prevention providers.

To specifically counteract or impede the increase in misuse of opioids and other drugs, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended certain substance misuse prevention strategies, especially in the wake of the pandemic (Centers for Disease Control, 2020). Key amongst those recommendations is expanding the provision and use of naloxone and overdose prevention education, as well as early intervention with individuals at the highest risk for overdose. Moreover, with reference to COVID-19's impact on substance abuse, the CDC endorses implementing those strategies with 1) public health departments, 2) community-based organizations, 3) healthcare providers, 4) harm reduction organizations, 5) first responders to overdoses, and 6) public safety agencies (law enforcement/criminal justice) (Centers for Disease Control, 2020). Even when the pandemic concerns have subsided, these strategies are still overall best practices to abate the increase of substance use disorders as well as impede, forestall or prevent the misuse of substances. Hence, this general abatement plan makes use of these strategies as best practices.

In accordance with the CDC's recommendations and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention's (CSAP) strategies, Brevard Prevention Coalition's proposal includes additional support and resources to the following:

- Brevard Public Schools
- Brevard County Jail
- Treatment providers located in Brevard County

- Healthcare providers in Brevard County
- Institutions of higher learning in Brevard County (colleges, universities, trade schools etc.)
- Non-profit social services agencies/providers, faith-based organizations and community coalitions

The abatement plan utilizes research-based and evidence-based approaches through nine (9) core strategies:

- A. Naloxone, or other FDA-approved drug, to reverse opioid overdoses
- B. Medication-Assisted Treatment (“MAT”) distribution and other opioid-related treatment
- C. Pregnant & Postpartum Women
- D. Expanding Treatment for Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome
- E. Expansion of Warm Hand-off Programs and Recovery Services
- F. Treatment for Incarcerated Population
- G. Prevention Programs
- H. Creating and Expanding Syringe Service Programs
- I. Evidence-based data collection and research analyzing the effectiveness of the abatement strategies within the State/County.

Agencies, entities, and providers participating in this plan are strongly encouraged to be active members of Brevard Prevention Coalition. The Brevard Prevention Coalition understands that once Brevard County adopts this plan as the Brevard County Opioid Misuse Abatement Plan, that Brevard County may select one or more of the Plan’s components to fund, in its sole discretion, and Brevard County may choose to accomplish one or more of the Plan’s components through any organization or contractor the County awards a grant or contract to, in keeping with its procurement and grant award processes.

## **Brevard County OUD/SUD Abatement Plan: Core Strategies**

### **A. Naloxone or other FDA-approved drug to reverse opioid overdoses**

1. Brevard Prevention Coalition and its member providers/agencies in cooperation with Brevard County Government, Brevard County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and each Brevard County city municipality’s emergency responders, will help facilitate Naloxone training for first responders, applicable Brevard Public Schools staff, community support groups and families.

This will include:

- **Awareness Events:** The Brevard Prevention Coalition staff will plan, host, and facilitate regular prevention resource fairs or conferences for Brevard County communities. The events will include Naloxone training, and Naloxone distribution, but also drug deactivation kit distribution (Deterra, Dispose Rx, etc.), and distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The events will also focus on how the community can socioemotionally reinforce itself after the increased negative impacts of opioid misuse, as well as the worsening mental health and substance misuse impacts that will linger after the COVID-19 pandemic. Local social services, education and prevention agencies will participate including the local school districts and neighboring regional coalitions. The

participating organizations will table the event and experts in the fields of prevention and mental health (psychological/emotional wellness) will be invited to present and speak on the latest effective strategies. Presenters will also include leaders in the community sectors of criminal justice, healthcare, treatment, and recovery, as well as educational sessions with the purpose of showing how evidence-based prevention strategies are effective. Substance use disorder treatment providers will be onsite to provide recovery resources and access to treatment. Healthcare providers will also be invited to discuss the medical concerns associated with substance use disorder, COVID-19 safety, appropriate use of PPE, and if possible, utilize the event as a vaccination site and administer COVID-19 tests. If possible, Continued Education Units (CEUs, CE, CMEs, etc.) will be provided for the applicable portions of the events.

- Supporting and facilitating naloxone training sessions to first/emergency responders including EMS, fire departments, etc.
  - Provision of ongoing training opportunities to community support groups on the use of and accessibility to naloxone
  - Partnering with Brevard Public Schools, colleges, universities, and area businesses to publicize the locations and availability of the next accessible naloxone training sessions. This will include partnering with these entities to host said trainings at their facilities to increase accessibility to families in the community. It will also include incentivizing the training sessions to encourage attendance by the general public beyond professional providers.
2. Brevard Prevention Coalition and its member providers/agencies in cooperation with Brevard County Government will increase naloxone distribution to individuals who are uninsured or whose insurance does not cover the needed service. This will include partnering with social services agencies to ensure they have an adequate supply of naloxone and ensuring the naloxone can be provided to uninsured or underinsured clients that do not have access to it through any other government-funded means.

## **B. Medication-Assisted Treatment (“MAT”) Distribution and other opioid-related treatment**

1. Working with providers affiliated with Brevard Prevention Coalition, funds will be made available to local MAT providers in order to expand their capacity to treat clients in need of MAT. A focus will be on increasing distribution of MAT to non-Medicaid eligible or uninsured individuals through these providers.
2. Provide MAT education and awareness training to healthcare providers, EMTs, law enforcement, and other first responders (see also **G. Prevention Programs**)
3. Provide funding to Treatment and Recovery Support Services such as residential and inpatient treatment, intensive outpatient treatment, outpatient therapy or counseling, and recovery housing that allow or integrate medication with other support services. These also include recovery support services such as peer coaching/support services at recovery community organizations, recovery centers, recovery high schools, etc. The goal would be to expand their capacity and provide an alternative option for individuals with OUD/SUD who are uninsured, under-insured, or do not qualify for Medicaid/Medicare.

## **C. Pregnant & Postpartum Women**

1. Added support will be given to the agencies and providers participating in the existing Family Strengthening/Healthy Start Coalition in order to enhance substance abuse prevention and treatment for prenatal and postpartum women. Initiatives that will be enhanced and expanded include:
  - Qualified substance misuse counselors and supportive staff will be placed at the Health Department clinics and Brevard Health Alliance locations in the county. In addition, certified recovery peer support professionals (Certified Peer Recovery Support Specialist, Certified Recovery Peer Specialist, etc.) will be offered/provided to obstetrician offices or OB/GYN facilities to assist with some of the more challenging cases with Community Connect of Healthy Start Coalition of Brevard that are evaluated to need a peer. This will be in addition to existing counselors provided by regional service providers in order to expand capacity. Duties will include expanding Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (“SBIRT”) services to non-Medicaid eligible or uninsured pregnant women.
  - Supporting local providers to expand comprehensive evidence-based treatment and recovery services, including MAT, for women with co-occurring opioid use disorder (OUD) and other substance use disorder (SUD)/mental health disorders for uninsured individuals for up to 12 months postpartum.
  - Increase the number of postnatal educational gifts and aftercare follow-up support (basic need items, follow-up sessions, etc.) provided to parents by Healthy Start Coalition on substance abuse/misuse prevention. A peer support specialist may be provided for use to perform said follow-up.
  - Support Healthy Start Coalition in biannually updating information given out pre- and postnatally to mothers/parents. In addition, the plan will include providing resources in the form of a prenatal book and supporting the development and maintenance of a mobile app that compliments both pre and postnatal needs.
  - Promote the Brevard operations and logistics of the Florida Department of Children & Families’ Substance Exposed Newborns (SEN) pilot program created to help the high number of removals of children/newborns from their parents’ custody in Brevard. These are removals related to substance misuse by the mother. Within this pilot, DCF has created a SEN specific unit, changed the ‘hotline’ responses, created a new substance exposed team and SEN position. Hence, these efforts can be expanded with added provider staffing as well as facilitate provider and trainings on how the SEN pilot functions.
  - Partner with local agencies to provide comprehensive wrap-around services to individuals with opioid use disorder (OUD) including housing, transportation, job placement/training, and childcare. This will include:
    - Rapid rehousing case management, one-time financial assistance process and aftercare follow-up designed to stabilize individuals with OUD and SUD headed for or maintaining their addiction recovery/sobriety.
    - Expanding existing transportation systems within the county (i.e. more buses, increased bus stop times, expanded bus routes, etc. and/or transportation vouchers for taxis or ride services like Lyft and Uber).
    - Expanded childcare services or funds to subsidize the cost for childcare, along with transportation to increase access to these childcare services.

#### **D. Expanding Treatment for Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome**

1. In order to support Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) babies residing in Brevard County, there will be collaboration with Brevard County's major hospital systems through the Treatment & Recovery/ Healthcare Professionals subcommittee of the Brevard Prevention Coalition's Opioid Misuse Task Force (as well as Brevard Health Alliance locations and the Florida Department of Health clinics in Brevard) in order to:
  - Expand comprehensive evidence-based and recovery support for NAS babies
  - Expand services for better continuum of care with infant-need dyad
  - Expand long-term treatment and services for medical monitoring of NAS babies and their families.

## **E. Expansion of Community Warm Hand-off Programs and Recovery Services**

1. Supply/fund support and staffing to implement this strategy in order to:
  - Expand services such as navigators and on-call teams to begin MAT in hospital emergency departments
  - Expand warm hand-off services to transition to recovery services, broaden scope of recovery services to include co-occurring SUD or mental health conditions
  - Provide comprehensive wrap-around services to individuals in recovery including housing, transportation, job placement/training, and childcare
2. **Peer Recovery Support/Community Support Groups:**
  - A structured partnership or supporting relationship with existing support groups (NA, AA, etc.). These groups are a protective and supportive community. Thus, the goal would be to ensure they have the harm reduction resources they need to continue to maximize their positive impact. These include updated printed materials, video resources, as well as awareness of the latest treatment, medical and educational resources. Furthermore, greater awareness for the public on how to locate a support group.
  - A prevention resource and support group will act as a resource and resiliency tool for parents wanting to mitigate existing risk factors that have been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic which also could lead to misuse of substances within the family. As a result of the pandemic, families are contending with a surge of parental and youth substance misuse, exacerbated addiction, increase in substance misuse risk factors (i.e., forced social isolation, healthcare crises, grief from unexpected deaths, etc.), sudden job loss, and general societal instability (American Medical Association, 2020). Brevard Prevention Coalition will develop, operate, and maintain a centralized online prevention community support group in partnership with other prevention and peer recovery support providers (certified recovery peer specialists, etc.). Facebook may be the initial platform utilized. However, the efficacy and needs will be assessed annually to evaluate the most effective medium to be used as well as the best conduit to in-person support. The prevention support and resource group, additionally, will serve as a protective measure for families seeking to avoid generational or intrafamilial substance misuse (i.e., a parent or other

sibling in the home battled/battles addiction and, thus, aiming to prevent another sibling/child from following that course). The group will be moderated and maintained by a professional specializing in addiction, prevention or mental health who carries a state certification, licensure or has sufficiently demonstrated competency and experience in an appropriate domain of the substance abuse field (CAP, MCAP, LMHC, LCSW, CAC, CPRS, CPS, CPP, etc.) – depending on the need. The facilitator moderating the group will be either an employee of Brevard Prevention Coalition or a qualified subcontracted community partner that is a member of the coalition.

### **3. Community Level:**

1. Brevard Prevention Coalition and Opioid Task Force organization of "warm handoff" of "warm touch" events to bring the community together in areas of high overdose deaths (EMS "hot spots"). The community events could include candlelight vigils, mini resource fairs, conferences, educational events, and/or recovery speakers. Even if organized events are not feasible, the coalition can still support distribution of grief packets to relatives and the community of individuals who have died of an overdose. The packets which will include treatment and recovery resources (MAT connections, peer support, counseling, etc.) for those who maybe seeking help and/or recovery. This contributes toward building safe spaces to stop the stigma of substance use disorder (SUD).

## **F. Treatment for Incarcerated Population**

1. Create and maintain a "warm handoff" process between Brevard County Jail and local substance use disorder treatment providers associated with Brevard Prevention Coalition and its opioid misuse task force initiative. This would involve ensuring that individuals arrested and coming through Brevard County Jail are not only handed recovery resources upon release/discharge, but also have an actual guided path to recovery and/or appropriate interventions. This guided or enhanced path will be created and maintained in collaboration with Brevard County Jail's contracted medical provider and may involve cooperation with the Public Defender's Office in Brevard County, Brevard County Drug Court and applicable Circuit Courts in Brevard County.
2. Increase funding for jails to provide treatment to inmates with OUD/SUD.
3. The coalition will host and facilitate both police academy and in-service trainings on interacting with youth, specifically during substance abuse-related encounters, and with minority communities/people of culture. Topics will include how best to communicate with these populations during a tense confrontation, explaining to the individuals why the officer is taking particular actions, or what the officer will do next— this can help officers diffuse and deescalate these encounters. Furthermore, this helps officers use substance abuse-related encounters as potential prevention educational opportunities. These trainings will involve collaborating with professionals in the law enforcement field and certified trainers. When possible, CEUs/CE credits can be offered to law enforcement staff for participation in these trainings.

**SUPPORTIVE RESEARCH:** Increased positive interactions between law enforcement and youths, as well as structured strategies between both, which foster a greater understanding of the perspectives of each, have been shown to increase the same protective factors that prevent youth substance misuse.

Studies have revealed that behavior resulting in severe school discipline often leads to juvenile justice intervention and that juvenile justice involvement leads to lifelong issues, often including drug-using behavior (Dong & Krohn, 2020). The main contributing factors to each are often Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), i.e. witnessing domestic violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, negative impacts of poverty, etc.

Police officers are a key adult group that often interact with at-risk youths at critical developmental moments. Those interactions can either be part of a positive turning point for the youths or a negatively contributing factor which adds to the likelihood of youths coping through substance misuse into adulthood. However, it has been noticed locally that officers do not receive enough training on trauma-informed interactions with at-risk youths.

Studies support that this is a widespread issue. For instance, published research covering a three-year period detailed the post-traumatic stress issues in youths participating in the study (average age of 15) resulting from negative police encounters (Jackson et al., 2019). These negative encounters and their effects can act as precursors to youths' aversion to authority figures in the future and/or coping with the trauma through misuse of drugs and alcohol (Dong & Krohn, 2020).

Hence, researchers and prevention professionals posit that law enforcement officers need to understand ACEs just as much as doctors need to understand ACEs prior to prescribing potentially addictive medication (Folk et al., 2021). One of the community-based research projects stemming from a CDC collaboration with the ONDCP is called the Combatting Opioid Overdose Through Community-Level Intervention initiative (Compton et al, 2019). An example of this is The Martinsburg Initiative, a program which addresses ACEs/PACEs (positive and adverse childhood experiences) via a neighborhood school-based and community policing strategy. The goal of such strategies is to make law enforcement part of the community wraparound team that advocates for youths positive development and instills a sense of true community safety in youths instead of a perception of oppression, predation and fear that many at-risk youths already have toward law enforcement.

Feeling safe, nurtured and understood by figures in positions of authority, like law enforcement, are well-known protective factors for at-risk youths which reduce the likelihood of substance misuse and addiction, as well as violent crimes by youths (Freeze, 2019). Additionally, increased empathy toward and genuine familiarity with at-risk youths and their individual ACEs improves the effectiveness of law enforcement as part of the community wraparound substance abuse prevention mechanism. The mutually desired outcome is reduction in youth substance misuse and reduction in youth substance use-related offenses.

In addition, law enforcement and criminal justice professionals experience specific mental and emotional impacts of the pandemic. According to research shared by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), COVID-19 will have long lasting impacts on law enforcement which may lead to permanent changes in policing protocols (Stogner et al., 2020). These factors may affect critical decisions law enforcement officers make on the job and overall job performance. As public restrictions lessen, it is becoming clearer that police departments will need to reestablish community relationships and develop strategies to deal with a public that has been economically impacted and has increased mental health

issues (Stogner et al., 2020). Thus, experts assert that community policing and crisis intervention training will be essential in successful post-pandemic policing (Stogner et al., 2020). Effective prevention strategies should both nurture the mental health of law enforcement officers, as well as mitigate the challenges law enforcement have with relating to youth populations and communities of culture.

## **G. Prevention Programs**

### **1. *Use Only As Directed* Program:**

**CSAP Strategy:** Information Dissemination, Problem Identification and Referral

**IOM Target/Covered Services Category:** Universal Indirect

**Service region:** Brevard County

- Brevard Prevention Coalition will implement a prevention program based on Utah's *Use Only As Directed* campaign and social marketing strategy with Brevard County regional adaptations. This campaign emphasizes the importance of harm reduction, information dissemination and appropriate use of medications (prescription, nonprescription and over-the-counter) as well as their safe disposal methods. During the pandemic, businesses slowed operations or closed altogether, many people refrained from social interactions and frontline workers contended with COVID-19 directly. A research study cited by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services predicted that the economic impact from the pandemic and the ensuing mass feelings of despair could lead to over 75,000 deaths from drug overdose, alcohol abuse, and suicide (Daker, 2020). Grimly, the CDC reports that it has already recorded over 80,000 overdose deaths alone as of February 2021. Reports of opioid-fatal and non-fatal overdoses have sharply increased in some areas across the country since the coronavirus pandemic began, reasons for which are multifaceted, but that do not negate the positive correlation. The implementation of the program based on the *Use Only As Directed* campaign aims to further mitigate the increase of substance misuse.
  - **Vendor/Businesses:** Establishments frequented by the 18- to 25-year-old age demographic such as local smoke shops, kava bars, vaping establishments, coffee houses and other similar entities, are a key population in addressing opioid use disorder as well as other substance use disorders. Young adults make up one of the largest demographics for substance use disorder and recent data reveals that two out of every three patients in treatment for opioid use disorder stated that their first usage occurred before the age of 25 (Silverstein, 2021). Brevard Prevention Coalition's Community Outreach Specialists will have the important task of fostering a culture of prevention, harm reduction and safety within these youth-targeting businesses. Each Outreach Specialist will have individually assigned regional sectors and aim to build positive relationships with these establishments to allow for promotion of harm reduction principals of substance misuse at their locations. This includes distribution, posting and updating of culturally sensitive flyers and signage that educate patrons on topics including, but not limited to 1) safe usage of controlled substances, 2) appropriate disposal of medications, 3) timely disposal of medications, 4) drug usage monitoring, and 5) practical lifesaving responses to overdoses. Where feasible, the Community Outreach Specialists will also host an information kiosk/table at several of these establishments quarterly where drug deactivation kits can be distributed.



- **Medical Clinics, including Health Department and Brevard Health Alliance**  
**locations:** Community Outreach Specialists will have an assigned list of medical clinics within a sector, or community, with the goal of educating and providing resources based on the *Use Only As Directed* safe usage messaging. This will include resources and materials about nonopioid alternatives to treating pain and safe opioid prescribing practices. Medical practitioners who prescribe opioids will be the focus (dentists, pain management centers, walk-in clinics, same-day surgery centers, etc.). As pharmaceutical representatives aggressively visited these medical professionals to promote pharmaceuticals, the Community Outreach Specialists similarly will diligently schedule visits to these medical offices to ensure they have sufficient materials to distribute to patients about proper medication disposal, nonopioid alternatives and safe usage practices.
  
- **Hospitals, Medical Centers, OB/GYN Facilities:**
  - a) *Use Only As Directed clinical contact* persons from the coalition (Nurse Practitioners, Physician’s Assistants, Certified Addiction Professionals, or other qualified specialists), subcontracted or direct hires, will serve as informational substance abuse prevention points of contact for their assigned hospitals and/or healthcare professionals. This strategy does not include actual assessment for treatment services. Rather, it serves as a Prevention Screening and Referral Service as defined by CSAP which is geared toward behavior change, but not through therapy. Screening is to identify whether an individual can be served by primary prevention services or must be referred out to treatment. When possible, this will include use of designated in-kind space for the coalition staff member at the medical facility for specified days/dates and time periods in order to provide this service.
  - b) *Community Outreach Specialists* will host/table a *Use Only As Directed* patient-focused informational kiosk semiannually at each major hospital in Brevard County. Other medical facilities may be included. The focus will be distribution of *Use Only As Directed* informational materials, information on local approved medication disposal sites, and overdose prevention educational material. If permitted by the hospital, Detera drug deactivation kits will be made available for patients visiting the hospital as well as for the hospital to keep in supply. Emergency departments will also be provided easy-to-carry informational cards on safe medication disposal to provide to applicable patients, along with local related resources. Furthermore, informational posters and quick reference guides will be provided for general patient areas, nursing stations, and waiting areas.
  - c) Increase and maintain number of recovery peer specialist/peer recovery support specialists at hospitals, Brevard Health Alliance locations, OB/GYN facilities and other medical facilities as capacity and funding allows. Peer Recovery Support Specialists are individuals who are in recovery from substance use or co-occurring mental health disorders. Their life experiences and recovery allow them to provide recovery support in such way that others can benefit from their experiences. According to National Alliance on Mental Illness, Florida Division (NAMI Florida), “research shows that peers can play a tremendous role in helping others in recovery from mental illness and addiction. Peers learn best from others who have been there.

Health insurers, treatment centers and others in the behavioral health arena are increasingly relying on peers to serve in leadership roles to assist others in recovery.”

- d) Informational sessions about the opioid crisis for the physicians and/or hospital board members will be hosted by the coalition staff and participating treatment providers. Such informational sessions may also be offered to other applicable medical facilities, such as OB/GYN clinics, etc. Educational sessions on safe opioid prescribing practices and nonopioid alternatives for patients will be shared with physicians and medical staff as well. More informational sessions may be scheduled if time and funding allow. These sessions will include training on ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences)/PACES (Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences, regarding how unresolved trauma can lead to self-medication and the role medical professionals can play in the prevention of patients’ future substance misuse in these scenarios.
- **Healthcare workers and first responders:** Education and training will be provided to healthcare workers, professional first responders and potential first responders. The coalition will organize and host CEU events (quarterly or semiannually – depending on funding availability and timeframe) about ongoing factors attributed to increased opioid addiction as well as overdoses. The event(s) will educate attendees on MAT, the latest trends and usage rates surrounding opioid misuse and opioid use disorder as further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The event(s) will also include development and distribution of *Use Only As Directed* opioid awareness and safe alternative materials and contact cards for first responders to distribute. Lastly, training on ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences)/PACES (Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences) regarding how unresolved trauma can lead to self-medication will be provided to attendees.

## 2. Educational System Outreach:

**CSAP Strategy:** Education, Information Dissemination, Community-based Process, Alternatives

**IOM Target/Covered Services Category:** Universal Direct

**Service region:** Brevard County

Several peer-reviewed research studies relate the impact the pandemic has had on teachers and students (Jain et al., 2021; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). In addition, based upon lower enrollment and the resulting loss of FTE, or full-time equivalency funding, Central Florida School districts, including Brevard Public Schools, are facing large budget reductions in the upcoming school year. Schools will need the added supplementary support from prevention providers.

Furthermore, schools will need support with helping students manage the socioemotional fallout from the pandemic’s societal impact. Thus, coalition staff will engage selected high schools and institutions of higher learning in Brevard County to fulfill the need of increased substance misuse prevention services. Public school selection will occur in collaboration with the local school district and these special strategies will focus on schools in at-risk communities seen as having the greatest need for prevention activities.

- **High Schools, Colleges and Universities:** The coalition **Prevention Specialists** along with local agencies which provide prevention services, the school faculty, and representatives from the local CareerSource will facilitate prevention-focused sessions, which include distribution of resource materials and interactive student participation. This proposed positive activity will occur quarterly or semiannually at each school location, as funding permits. The goal is preventing recreational use of opioids, alcohol,

and other drugs in teens/young adults during their critical formative years. Working with each school's guidance department, we will identify the most effective, appropriate way to present prevention strategies to high school students as well as colleges/universities with the goal of promoting a substance abuse-free life, along with highlighting the negative professional ramifications of substance misuse. Featured speakers will include professional athletes, professional creative artists, etc., preferably those with lived experience pertaining to substance misuse/substance use disorder. Furthermore, this component serves as a vocational awareness and occupational strategizing workshop. The resource material distribution will consist of materials from the Central Florida substance abuse prevention coalitions' media campaign called *Better Without It*, developed by Orange County's Office for a Drug-Free Community, Brevard Prevention Coalition, and Seminole Prevention Coalition. Résumé writing and career selection activities through CareerSource may also be included. Efficacy and impact will be measured with post-event/post-activity surveys.

- **Middle Schools and Elementary Schools:**

- **I Choose Me – “I Choose...Art” activities** - Based on the youth-focused *I Choose Me* media campaign concept developed by Brevard Prevention Coalition, Seminole Prevention Coalition, and Orange County's Office for a Drug-Free Community, the coalition will bring creative arts (music, painting, etc.) workshops to the students at selected elementary schools throughout Brevard County. These workshops will be in coordination with Brevard Public Schools and hosted at the school sites. The workshops will be co-facilitated by creative arts organizations with youth outreach programs and/or professional artists, along with a coalition **Prevention Specialist**. Materials for art workshops will be provided for the students and the activity will be framed in how the arts contribute to substance abuse prevention. Age-appropriate prevention resources will also be provided. Activities will include creative writing, lyrical expression, mural art, sketch art, and music. This will be a multidisciplinary program which offers youth a rare and safe outlet for healing, growth, and self-discovery through positive self-expression and mentorship. Creative writing, songwriting, and lyrical expression exercises equip youth with tools for personal reflection and interpersonal communication, as well as awareness of group collaboration and performance etiquette. Involvement in arts education has been shown to improve students' abilities to critique themselves, self-reflect, learn from mistakes, manage behaviors, improve decision making, maintain a positive self-concept, maintain self-efficacy, maintain school engagement, and respect others' perspectives. Efficacy and impact will be measured with post-event/post activity surveys administered to participating students.
- **Red Ribbon Week activities:** Red Ribbon Week is an alcohol, tobacco, and other drug and violence prevention awareness campaign observed annually October 23<sup>rd</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>. Coalition Prevention Specialists will actively participate in the Red Ribbon Week activities of select elementary and middle/junior high schools in Brevard County. Red Ribbon Week will be used as an opportunity to continue talking to students about the dangers of drugs. Coalition staff will also work with the Parent Teacher Student Association and other social services providers at the school to plan a school-wide Red Ribbon Rallies. For example, the Prevention Specialists may facilitate an activity where students design graphics for the National Red Ribbon Theme annually which can be submitted to the Red Ribbon organization for usage

consideration (contest). Alternatively, the school could permit the coalition to decorate the interior and exterior of the school with students in recognition of Red Ribbon Week and what it means. In addition, Prevention Specialists can help plan and participate in school parent/family nights where the Prevention Specialists and faculty talk to parents and students about securing and taking inventory of their home medicine cabinets. The goal would be to prevent prescription drug abuse as well as provide added prevention resources. If applicable, efficacy and impact will be measured with post-event surveys administered to participating students.

- **School-Based Prevention Program** – School-based Prevention Specialists through nonprofit providers will provide developmentally appropriate social-emotional education, small group, and individual services to elementary and middle school students at participating schools. The program is designed to focus on promoting positive behaviors to youth in order to enhance pro-social skills as well as prevent substance abuse, violent, and at-risk behaviors. Youth activities and tasks are appropriate to age and developmental abilities and support strength building and enhancing protective factors. The implementation of services exemplifies the Prevention program philosophy to promote positive youth development through guidance, education, support and problem-solving skills to help recover from crisis, cope with life transitions and daily living stresses, identify support systems, and improve individual functioning. Service implementation on classroom-based services will incorporate evidence-based curricula such as *Botvin Lifeskills*, *Too Good For Drugs & Violence*, or similar and decided upon in cooperation with Brevard Public Schools.
- Universal Indirect services offered in partnership with community agencies to provide youth and parent education, resource support, participate in prescription take back initiatives, and provide overdose prevention information.
- As needed, ACEs trainings will be made available and provided to the staff of school district employees. The regularity, method, venue, and training vendor/facilitator for such trainings will be coordinated and approved through the appropriate school district level personnel.
- Based on the “Interacting With Law Enforcement” curriculum developed by Stanford University, trainings will engage with Brevard Public Schools to introduce trainings including: 1) constitutional rights, responsibilities, and the law; 2) law enforcement’s responsibilities in the community; 3) implicit bias; and 4) communicating with law enforcement.

### **3. General Community Outreach:**

**CSAP Strategy(ies):** Community-based Process; Information Dissemination

**IOM Target/Covered Services Category:** Universal Indirect

**Service region:** Brevard County

1. **External Summits and Conferences:** Sponsor or scholarship criminal justice professionals, medical professionals, prevention professionals, treatment professionals, school district staff, and personnel or community coalition members to attend the annual National Rx Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit or events of equivalent caliber. Such summits and conferences allow jurisdictions and municipalities across the country to compare and evaluate effective methods that may be useful. In addition, it affords regions the opportunity to adopt improved methods of effectively addressing OUD and SUD.

2. **Occupational Training and Employment:** Since employment is an essential part of recovery, enhance the pathway to career readiness for individuals in recovery who are without stable, gainful or legal employment. Support and partnership will be provided to existing CareerSource Brevard/Workforce programs to connect those on path to recovery to employers. Resources will be used to expand the reach of CareerSource Brevard's Recovery Works program and promote it to the recovery community as well as to treatment providers who may be able to refer appropriate candidates. In addition, support will be provided to the capacity building efforts of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Navigator program to enhance business and industry knowledge and acceptance of persons in recovery as an expanded talent pool for staffing needs.
3. As a prevention method, youth and law enforcement bonding activities will be hosted at school sites, at local community centers or other appropriate venues. Law enforcement agencies attending will participate in creative arts activities, sports, and group discussions with youths in the community. These events will include community leaders respected and recognized by youths and communities of culture who themselves may have had unfavorable interactions with law enforcement in the past, been involved in gang activity, or were otherwise at-risk, but who now have a positive impact on the community. The goal would be to help bridge the gap between law enforcement, youths, and at-risk populations. The program will also include law enforcement officers participating in social media challenges with youths and these special populations (i.e., a TikTok dance/viral video done with law enforcement as a group to be shared on social media, etc.). The goal will be to decrease tension in underserved communities, help humanize law enforcement to those that may automatically view them in an unfavorable light and help law enforcement to humanize groups that feel unfairly targeted. Law enforcement officers attending such events will be requested to wear their "community outfits" rather than full patrol gear, if permitted by their command staff. Appropriate attire may help remove engagement barriers between law enforcement and the community participants, i.e. youths, etc.

#### 4. Media Campaign

**CSAP Strategy(ies):** Information Dissemination

**IOM Target/Covered Services Category:** Universal Indirect

**Service region:** Brevard County

1. Funding made available through the county and other funding sources will be used to supplement and expand the reach and development of the existing Central Florida substance abuse prevention coalitions' media campaign. A substance abuse prevention campaign is annually developed and operated, or enhanced, by Brevard Prevention Coalition, Seminole Prevention Coalition, and Orange County's Drug Free Office. Brevard County is a targeted market. This proposed campaign expansion will add on the *Use Only As Directed* campaign through online web-based and social media platforms as well as the traditional media of television PSAs, billboards, bus wraps, radio, bus stop shelters, retail store windows, etc. Furthermore, these will be cycled and integrated with the Gen-Z focused campaigns (currently *Better Without It*, also developed through the ongoing collaboration between Brevard Prevention Coalition, Seminole Prevention Coalition, and Orange County's Drug Free Office) already developed and set for use by the Central Florida regional substance abuse prevention coalitions.

#### **H. Creating and Expanding Syringe Service Programs (SSPs)**

Harm reduction appears to be one of the most realistic intermediate options on the path to effective abatement and prevention of substance use disorders. The county will work in accordance with experienced providers (i.e. Project Response, SUD treatment providers, MAT providers, etc.) and Brevard Prevention Coalition to support Syringe Services Programs. The plan will also include training to county officials on the logistics of SSPs as well as their efficacy.

Addiction can have intergenerational effects in the family and on peer groups. Hence, close associates, parents, siblings, and other family members with substance use issues can adversely impact their non-using relatives and acquaintances, increasing the chances of them acquiring a substance use disorder or suffering related impacts caused by intrafamilial or peer use. According to the CDC:

“Syringe services programs (SSPs) are also referred to as syringe exchange programs (SEPs) and needle exchange programs (NEPs). Although the services they provide may vary, SSPs are community-based programs that provide access to sterile needles and syringes, facilitate safe disposal of used syringes, and provide and link to other important services and programs such as:

- Referral to substance use disorder treatment programs.
- Screening, care, and treatment for viral hepatitis and HIV.
- Education about overdose prevention and safer injection practices.
- Vaccinations, including those for hepatitis A and hepatitis B.
- Screening for sexually transmitted diseases.
- Abscess and wound care.
- Naloxone distribution and education.
- Referral to social, mental health, and other medical services.”

#### **SUPPORTIVE RESEARCH ON SSPs:**

##### **From CDC.gov -**

“When people who inject drugs use an SSP, they are more likely to enter treatment for substance use disorder and stop injecting than those who don’t use an SSP. New users of SSPs are five times as likely to enter drug treatment as those who don’t use the programs. People who inject drugs and who have used an SSP regularly are nearly three times as likely to report a reduction in injection frequency as those who have never used an SSP.

Nonsterile injections can lead to transmission of HIV, viral hepatitis, bacterial, and fungal infections and other complications. By providing access to sterile syringes and other injection equipment, SSPs help people prevent transmitting bloodborne and other infections when they inject drugs. In addition to being at risk for HIV, viral hepatitis, and other blood-borne and sexually transmitted diseases, people who inject drugs can get other serious, life-threatening, and costly health problems, such as infections of the heart valves (endocarditis), serious skin infections, and deep tissue abscesses. Access to sterile injection equipment can help prevent these infections, and health care provided at SSPs can catch these problems early and provide easy-to-access treatment to a population that may be reluctant to go to a hospital or seek other medical care.

SSPs reduce health care costs by preventing HIV, viral hepatitis, and other infections, including endocarditis, a life-threatening heart valve infection. The estimated lifetime cost of treating one person living with HIV is more than \$450,000. Hospitalizations in the U.S. for substance-use-related infections cost over \$700 million each year. SSPs reduce these costs and help link people to treatment to stop using drugs.

Studies show that SSPs protect the public and first responders by providing safe needle disposal and reducing the presence of needles in the community.

SSPs do not cause or increase illegal drug use. They do not cause or increase crime.

SSPs help people overcome substance use disorders. If people who inject drugs use an SSP, they are more likely to enter treatment for substance use disorder and reduce or stop injecting. A Seattle study found that new users of SSPs were five times as likely to enter drug treatment as those who didn't use the programs. People who inject drugs and who have used an SSP regularly are nearly three times as likely to report reducing or stopping illicit drug injection as those who have never used an SSP. SSPs play a key role in preventing overdose deaths by training people who inject drugs how to prevent, rapidly recognize, and reverse opioid overdoses. Specifically, many SSPs give clients and community members "overdose rescue kits" and teach them how to identify an overdose, give rescue breathing, and administer naloxone, a medication used to reverse overdose."

(See <https://www.cdc.gov/ssp> for sources and additional supportive data)

## **I. Evidence-based data collection and research analyzing the effectiveness of the abatement strategies within the county**

1. Partner with local colleges, universities or third-party evaluators to assess the effectiveness of the abatement plan strategies. The selected evaluator will provide statistical data on the impact of the plan, including areas of needed improvement and needed enhancements. The evaluation will include utilizing the local data collected from both the Brevard Medical Examiner's Office and EMS Community Paramedic "Heat Map" for overdoses in the county. The evaluation period should align with the start and end dates of the implementation of the plan which may not necessarily align with a calendar year, i.e. county, state or federal fiscal years, or a project period defined by the county or funded body.

### **Core Strategies Conclusion:**

All the above referenced strategies will include hiring additional needed staffing, including social workers, specialists or other related behavioral health workers to facilitate expansions above. The unified implementation of each method will provide help to the most at-risk groups, such as adolescents, young adults, substance-exposed newborns, pregnant women, postpartum women, under-served populations and medical staff who may both prescribe/administer opioids and find themselves at risk of substance use disorder. In addition, the methods will offer needed education, prevention strategies and resources to communities, law enforcement agencies, first responders and providers in the substance use disorder field.

*(Activities, scope, and range of the proposed activities can be scaled up or down depending on the funding available to Brevard County).*

[END OF PLAN]

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