

Commonwealth of Virginia
State Opioid Treatment Authority

COVID 19 AND Opioid Treatment Programs

Frequently asked questions

The following information is meant to support opioid treatment program (OTP) medical directors relating to the corona virus (COVID-19). This information is fluid at this time and will evolve as the virus progresses within the state of Virginia.

For clinic specific guidance please contact me the SOTA at diane.oehl@dbhds.virginia.gov or 804-371-4616 (work), 804-972-2284 (cell) or 804-481-6261 (cell). As information comes in I will be sending out updated versions.

How do we reduce transmission in our program facility?

- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has provided interim infection and control recommendations in health care settings
- Anyone with respiratory illness (e.g., cough, runny nose, shortness of breath, etc.) should be given a mask immediately upon entering the clinic and removed to an isolated area to be assessed by the highest medical personell in the facility at that time. A local list of resources on where the patient can be assessed further should be given to the patient. The patient can be dosed in the isolated area.
- Hand sanitizer should be available at all entry ways and throughout the facility.
- Clean all surfaces and knobs several times throughout the day with FDA Approved sanitizers.
- At this time I am approving liberal take-homes to decrease the daily traffic and potential exposure in the facility. If someone has sufficient time in treatment you can provide them take-homes without an exception request. Those patients who are stable but do not meet the time in treatment will require an exception request through the SAMHSA Extranet website.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (recite the ABC's while scrubbing your hands)
- Cover your mouth and nose with your elbow when you cough or sneeze
- If you are not feeling well STAY HOME!!

Can we dose someone in a separate location or in their car if they present with a fever or a cough?

Yes, Yes and Yes!

Develop protocols for OTP staff to take clients to a secure location or for “curb dosing” This needs to be performed by a nurse and if possible a security guard.

OTP staff should use universal precautions when attending to a patient who is presenting with “flu like” symptoms

IF someone presents with respiratory issues or a fever, or if they are diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19, can we provide take-home doses?

The CDC has set the quarantine period for anyone who has a confirmed case or exposure to COVID-19 at 14 days. Therefore, a request for 14 days of take-homes is warranted.

If a patient is positive and is not stable then try to identify an individual who would agree to be the chain of custody for the security of the medication. Call me if you have a case like this and we will develop a plan.

If the patients and staff have been exposed then protocols need to be developed to address a clinic wide take-home policy. This should include emergency contact information for facility personnel so the patients are able to contact someone.

Please note that you must consult with both your public health jurisdiction and the Virginia State Opioid Treatment Authority

Download TAP 34 – Disaster Planning Handbook for Behavioral Health Treatment Programs from the SAMHSA website:

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/TAP-34-Disaster-Planning-Handbook-for-Behavioral-Health-Treatment-Programs/SMA13-4779>

Should we be worried about any medication shortages and/or disruptions of a medication supply for methadone and/or buprenorphine containing products?

At this time there have been no reported concern from state or federal partners about a potent disruption in the medication supply for methadone or buprenorphine containing products.

However, it is imperative that you make sure you have a sufficient supply of medication on hand in the event of a clinic closure. A minimum of a 14 day supply per patient is recommended.

What else can OTPs be doing to prepare for the COVID -19?

- **Ensure your Emergency Preparedness Plan is up to date**
- **Ensure you have accurate contact information for all of the patients and staff**
- **Ensure your program leadership has the contact information for the State Opioid Treatment Authority:**
Diane.oehl@dbhds.virginia.gov
Cell: 804-972-2284 or 804-481-6261
- **Explore the option of adjusting your current dosing schedule and adjust it if needed**
- **Current guidelines recommend social distancing of 6 feet or more. You might have to have someone posted at the door to limit the number of patients in the building at one time.**
- **IF you have any concerns do not hesitate to contact Diane Oehl-day or night**