

## **Meeting Minutes of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Public Education Subcommittee May 17, 2023, Approved**

### **Attendees:**

Keigan Aabel-Brown, Sarah Barton, Tahnee Bryant, Carolyn Canini, Cathy Capps, Lori Garrett-Bumba, Jenny Lancaster, Anne Martin, Lyn O'Connell (chair), James Phillips, Tina Ramirez, Elizabeth Shahan, Yolanda Sowards, Jessica Smith, Lee Storrow, Sarah White

### **Opening:**

Lyn O'Connell (chair) provided welcome and opening remarks of this meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment, Public Education Subcommittee. The meeting was called to order on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, and was conducted by Zoom conference. A quorum was present to approve March and April meeting minutes. Keigan made the motion for approval and Tahnee seconded the motion. The objective of this meeting was to collaborate on assembling the Strengths, Opportunities, and Roadblocks slide for the State Planning Meeting in June and to receive updates from the workgroups.

### **Agenda Items:**

#### **Workgroup Updates:**

- Keigan provided an update, stating that he and Jenny are in the process of completing the slide deck for the training. They are incorporating mental health elements and updating the stigma-related content specific to substance use. The slide deck was submitted to the Community Access and BBH three weeks ago for final approval and feedback. Once finalized, it will be forwarded to DHHR Communications.
- A committee dedicated to addressing stigma and developing the state reporting plan is scheduled to meet again this month. Their main focus will be discussing communication strategies for statewide messaging. They are currently in the process of identifying suitable clips for TV ads and creating a comprehensive messaging campaign that will be implemented over the next 3-5 years.
- Tahnee highlighted the importance of expanding the pool of trainers who provide stigma training, particularly by engaging partners in the recovery community. Subcommittee members

suggested involving recovery community organizations, the WV Hospital Association, the Business Summit, and the PRSS and Recovery Housing Conference, which has an available slot on the third day to introduce the training in June. Lyn also mentioned the need to obtain a list of state conferences to stay informed about new opportunities to introduce the training in different areas.

## **State Planning Meeting (Strengths, Opportunities, Roadblocks)**

### **Strengths**

- They are a dedicated group consisting of individuals representing a wide range of backgrounds and experiences has actively participated in stigma trainings. Their collective efforts aim to address and promote discussions surrounding stigma.
- The representation in the group spans across all regions of the state and encompasses various stages of the continuum, including prevention, treatment, and recovery. This inclusive approach ensures a comprehensive perspective and involvement from different sectors.
- Efforts are being made to customize the stigma training to suit diverse populations and incorporate discussions on mental health and stigma. The aim is to create a training program that is adaptable and effective, providing participants with an understanding of the various forms of stigma, including those that may be unconscious or unintentional.
- The training has received feedback from various groups, including those with lived experiences, law enforcement, and behavioral health organizations. The feedback received is valued and considered essential for continuously enhancing the mission of reducing stigma. The training remains open to feedback, as ongoing improvements are sought to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with the goal of reducing stigma.

### **Opportunities**

- There is an opportunity to provide a platform for individuals who are currently actively using substances or have recently experienced stigma associated with substance use disorder (SUD) or mental health diagnoses. This platform would allow their voices to be heard and contribute to the conversation surrounding stigma reduction efforts.
- During the practical application phase, there is an opportunity to identify and collaborate with new partners for implementation. This phase presents a space for exploring and engaging with potential partners who can contribute to the successful execution of the initiative.
- It is important to continue considering the use of alcohol and tobacco without neglecting their significance.
- By providing QRTs with opportunities to report their activities and observations, the subcommittee will be able to efficiently identify and address specific areas in need of assistance. This reporting mechanism enables timely and targeted support for areas requiring specialized help.
- It is important to continue considering the use of alcohol and tobacco without neglecting their significance.

- The focus is not only on reaching individuals who are already aware of stigma but also on targeting those with limited awareness.
- The conversation revolved around the importance of professional ethics training and the need to update codes of ethics, with the recognition that stigma can play a significant role in these discussions.
- After the training, it is important to include discussions on social and racial justice as part of the ongoing dialogue. This includes referring participants to additional resources and ensuring that presenters have a clear understanding of the distinction between stigma and discrimination. The goal is to equip individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to address various related topics that may arise during discussions, while keeping the primary focus on stigma reduction.

### **Roadblocks**

- The subcommittee acknowledged the existence of populations that may be resistant to engaging in conversations about stigma. It was emphasized that during training sessions, there may be individuals in the room who are personally affected by SUD or have limited resources to support others, which can lead to frustration or anger. To address this, it is crucial to prepare trainers on how to handle such emotions, de-escalate tense situations, and foster a compassionate atmosphere in the room, particularly for individuals in recovery.
- Some town councils may exhibit reluctance in acknowledging SUD as a prevalent issue in their communities. To address this challenge, the subcommittee proposed utilizing the ODCP dashboard and county snapshots as tools to demonstrate that SUD is a systemic problem. In conjunction with these visuals, a toolkit can be developed to accompany presentations, providing actionable steps for implementing stigma reduction efforts in everyday life. One example of a simple yet impactful change is promoting language awareness through campaigns like "Words Matter."

### **Adjournment:**

Lyn thanked the subcommittee members for their attendance and involvement. The subcommittee is scheduled to reconvene in June.