

ALLIANCE NEWS

Alliance for Better Communities

SPECIAL EDITION



CHANGES IN SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT IN THE AGE OF COVID 19

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Social support along with involvement in recovery programs has been integral to substance abuse treatment. Without these, the distress caused by isolation can be a significant factor in causing relapse. The Covid-19 epidemic has shut down many of the in-person group meetings which form such a critical part of drug abuse recovery services. The challenge now is how to provide therapy and support in the age of the Corona crisis.

Those who have smartphones and computers can access online meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous and mental health and substance abuse programs. Others can reach telephone helplines and hotlines maintained by AA, and Narcotics Anonymous. People can also contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the National Institute on Drug Abuse for support.¹

The Hazeldon Betty Ford Foundation has implemented a program which they refer to as "Virtual IOP". This program combines online group therapy with individual counseling sessions. The goal is to replicate face to face treatment in a virtual environment. Safeguards have been put in place to comply with HIPAA compliant telemedicine standards. Trained counselors conduct sessions, and psychiatrists are utilized to provide emotional support and the prescribing of medication-assisted treatment. Specialized online meetings and discussion boards addressing particular areas of interest are also provided.²

What is
**Addiction
Phone Counseling?**
for
Family
Members

**Alcohol and
Drug Counselor
Practice Test**
Mometrix

The complex block contains two promotional images. The top image is titled "Addiction Phone Counseling? for Family Members" and shows a man on a phone, a woman on a phone, and a woman sitting at a desk. The bottom image is titled "Alcohol and Drug Counselor Practice Test" and shows a person holding a tablet displaying a woman in a white lab coat. The Mometrix logo is at the bottom.



Some rehab facilities are still encouraging in-patient treatment. Preventive measures are being taken in an attempt to ensure that treatment centers remain coronavirus-free. Testing of patients and potential patients for COVID-19 is being conducted, and programs are being adapted to comply with social-

distancing guidelines.³ However, the recent outbreaks of the virus in nursing homes makes it questionable as to how safe these in-patient facilities actually are. Substance abusers are particularly susceptible to COVID-19 because of the damage that smoking drugs and intravenous injection causes to the respiratory system. Switching to online programs seems a much safer alternative to long term stays at rehab centers.

The health departments in Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence County recently completed a survey of adult residents of the area regarding their behavior and attitudes during the current crisis. The results showed that 54 percent of respondents felt more lonely and isolated, 64 percent felt more anxious and nervous and a large number felt very concerned about contracting the virus. Clearly support is needed to address the mental health issues which Covid - 19 has brought out. For those receiving or needing substance abuse treatment, isolation has been a particular concern. The technologies available to bring people together and to facilitate online meetings and individual treatment sessions are critical to assure that the mental health issues of substance abusers are addressed.⁴

Experts note that “**Addiction thrives on secrecy and loves to catch people off-guard**”. During COVID-19 social isolation, it can progress rapidly. People dealing with strong cravings or relapse, are urged to contact medical providers, family, or close friends to find out about the availability of online services as an alternative to going to emergency rooms where the risk of infection is significant. Telemedicine sessions can provide the means to obtain the medications and other treatment which is essential to substance abusers facing crisis situations.⁵ Oasas through New York State is providing counselors by phone and online to determine the most appropriate treatments, and they are prepared to offer medication-assisted treatment remotely where required. The Hopeline at 1-877-8-HOPENY can be reached to provide referrals to services available in various areas of the state.⁵

ALLIANCE MEETING GOES ONLINE IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19



ANITA LEADS FROM AFAR



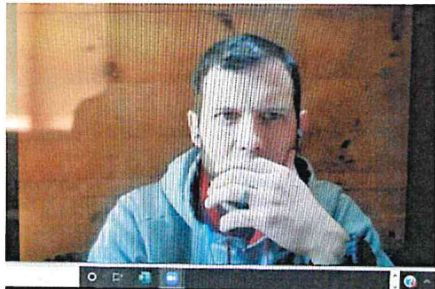
CHAIRMAN JENNINGS GIVES COVID UPDATE



ASST. ATTORNEY GENERAL IN CHARGE, DEANNA NELSON, TALKS ABOUT COVID SCAMS



WANDA HOLTZ DISCUSSES ANCHOR RECOVERY CENTER NEWS



TIM SWEENEY, TUNES 92.5, DISCUSSES MEDIA SUPPORT DURING THE PANDEMIC



RALPH WYLIE GIVES MOVING ACCOUNT OF HIS STRUGGLES WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE-COMMUNITY LIAISON, CPACCSOR GRANT



TAMMIE MILLER FROM BOCES

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POEM BY RALPH WYLIE:

Being in quarantine has taught me a lot. Some people find it boring while some hate the thought of being inside. For me, this is a time to make adjustments and improvements to my daily living. This is the time to work on aspects of my life I don't usually get the chance to. I see this as a learning experience.

We take for granted the things in our lives we have lost over the past few weeks. Some people who were well off before are now seeing what life is like for those who struggle daily. Does this change affect people in the lower class? Probably not. For us, this situation is a normal way of life. Now that we've all had the chance to experience this "new normal," hopefully when this is all said and done, class will no longer separate us, and a newfound respect will be reached within our community—people helping people no matter what class they're in.

Remember, this could be worse. So instead of focusing on the Covid-19 pandemic we're facing, maybe it would be wiser to focus on a solution to the root of the problem: Ourselves. Become selfless and learn to love and respect one another. Above all else, we are human beings. No more, no less. We all struggle no matter where we are in life. Devoting a few minutes to help someone in need would bring a positive reinforcement to help encourage change, promote growth, and create opportunities within ourselves as well as in the community.

Mr. Wylie shared this poem at the April 21, 2020 Alliance Meeting.