

# ALLIANCE NEWS



Alliance for Better Communities

SPECIAL EDITION

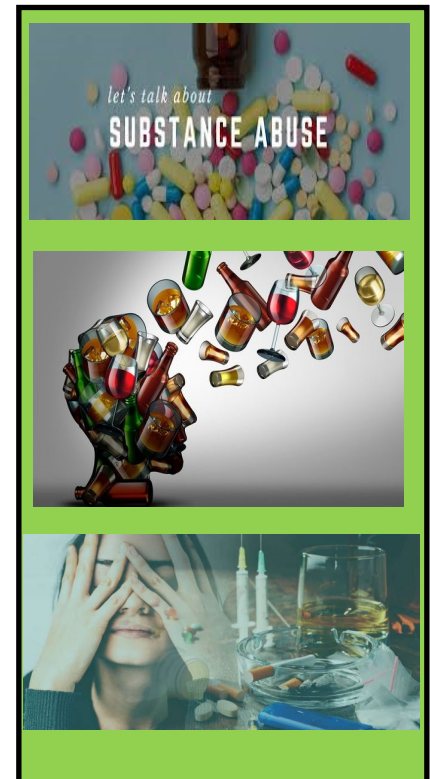
## SUBSTANCE ABUSE ISSUES 2021

FEBRUARY 2021

By: MARTIN J. ROTHSCHILD, J.D.

The so-called War on Drugs has been ongoing since the Nixon administration in the 1970s. The federal drug budget has steadily increased and grew from 28.8 billion in 2017 to 29.9 billion in 2019. The outgoing Trump administration claimed to take a hard-line approach to drug abuse. Nonetheless, little progress was made due to several factors, but in particular the coronavirus pandemic which has led to greater numbers of relapses and overdoses.<sup>1</sup>

President Biden, during the campaign, set out a plan for combatting the opioid crisis. He emphasized the need to provide access to substance use disorder treatment and mental health services by designating those services as essential, as ObamaCare did, so that insurers are obligated to provide coverage for them. He further proposed expanding Medicaid coverage for those services to provide greater assistance to the poor and underprivileged population.<sup>2</sup>



There are several specific elements to the Biden Plan. Directing the U.S. Justice Department to investigate what caused the opioid crisis, and take civil and criminal action where appropriate, is listed as a top priority. Banning drug manufacturers from providing payments or incentives to physicians and other prescribers is another priority. The Plan also includes terminating tax breaks for pharmaceutical corporations' advertisement spending, and making effective prevention, treatment and recovery services available to all who need them. Ex-



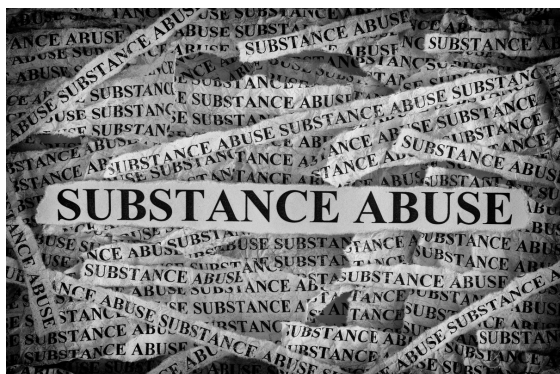
panding treatment in rural communities where there is lack of access to treatment and substance abuse is rampant is high on the list. There is further a recognized need to invest in evidence-based, cost-effective prevention programs in schools and communities to reduce the development of substance use disorders. Making Medication Assisted

Treatment, MAT, available to all who need it, reaching universal access no later than 2025 is a stated goal.<sup>3</sup>

Whether the substance abuse crisis will increase or wane in 2021 remains an open question. Prior to the pandemic, opioid abuse had actually begun to decrease to some extent. With lockdowns, and the idling

of large segments of the workforce, there has been a significant psychological impact resulting in more suicides, spousal and child abuse, as well as rises in alcohol and drug use. According to the CDC, in 2020 anxiety disorder symptoms were about three times greater than those reported in the second quarter of 2019 (25.5% versus 8.1%), and depressive disorder was about four times that reported in second quarter 2019 (24.3% versus 6.5%). CDC also reported that 13.3% of respondents reported starting or increasing substance abuse (including drugs and alcohol). Researchers at the CDC stated: *“To reduce potential harm of increased substance use related to COVID-19, resources, including social support, comprehensive treatment options and harm reduction services, are essential and should remain accessible”*.<sup>4</sup>

Youth substance abuse, including vaping, remains an area of great concern in the new year. The results of the the 2020 Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey of drug use and attitudes in middle and high school students released in December 2020 revealed that although teen vaping both of nicotine and marijuana had leveled off from prior years, use remained high. The survey was conducted with 11,821 students in 112 schools. Encouragingly, the survey showed low levels of more serious forms of substance use among teens, including very low levels of opioid use despite the devastating effects opioids have had on all older age groups including young adults. Nonetheless, abuse of stimulants among certain age groups of young people has increased. A CDC study published in the journal *Pediatrics* showed increases in suspected nonfatal overdoses involving cocaine, and methamphetamine in children and teens between 2016 and 2019. The Monitoring the Future survey showed decreases in use of prescription stimulants in 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders but a trend toward increased use among 8<sup>th</sup> graders.<sup>5</sup>



The NIDA (National Institute on Drug Abuse) has issued funds to existing grantees to help study the impact of the pandemic on adolescents’ risk of substance use and their access to prevention and treatment services.<sup>6</sup> As the year progresses, the results of this and other studies of substance abuse in 2021 will be revealed.

# ALLIANCE MEETING IS BACK ON ZOOM

## THE PANDEMIC HANGS ON –WHEN WILL IT END!



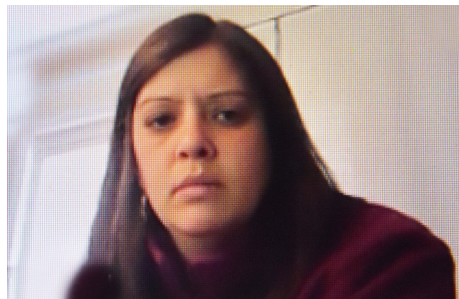
### School Perspective:

The kids are (mostly) doing ok!  
The adults are exhibiting great levels of stress and anxiety.  
(We need to watch out for our teachers!)

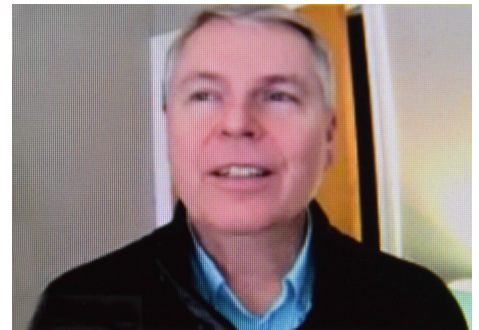
**Kylie Schell, LMSW, Behavioral Specialist at BOCES, Independent Clinician and Adjunct Professor at Nazareth College, gave a presentation on the impact of COVID on the mental health of individuals and families.**



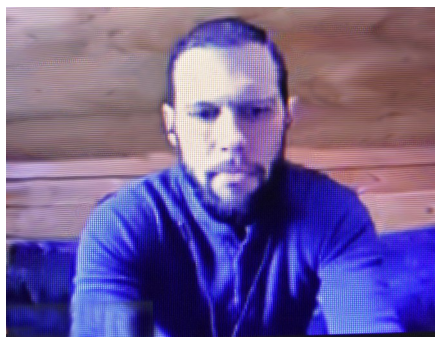
**NURSE TIINA CONEIL REMAINS PROTECTED FROM THE VIRUS**



**TRACY LEONARD**



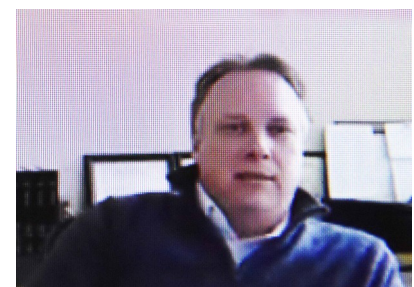
**BOB THARP**



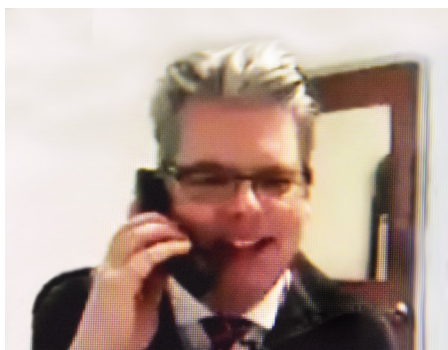
**BILL VAN ORMAN-FORT DRUM**



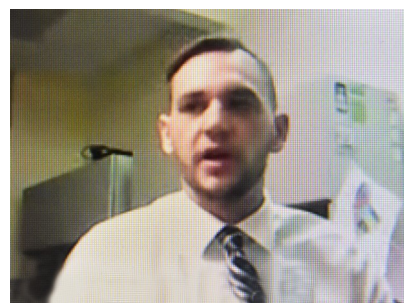
**PATRICK HICKEY-NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH**



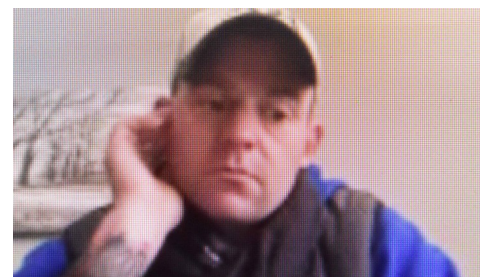
**TIM RUETTEN**



**CHAIRMAN JENNINGS EFFECTIVELY MULTI-TASKS**



**GRANT ROBINSON, CARC, CRPA**



**JOSH SHERMAN**

## REFERENCES

1. Kiernan, J., Drug use by State, 2021s Problem Areas, *Wallet Hub*, May,2020, retrieved from: <https://wallethub.com/edu/drug-use-by-state/35150>
2. The Biden Plan to end the Opioid Crisis, *Biden/Harris*, Jan. 2021, retrieved from: <https://joebiden.com/opioidcrisis/>
3. The Biden Plan to end the Opioid Crisis, id.
4. Drug Abuse on the Rise Because of COVID-19, *EHS today*, Aug. 2020, retrieved from: <https://www.ehstoday.com/covid19/article/21139889/drug-abuse-on-the-rise-because-of-the-coronavirus>
5. As 2020 Closes Many Questions Remain about Youth Substance Use Trends, *Nora's Blog*, Dec. 2020, retrieved from: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2020/12/2020-closes-many-questions-remain-about-youth-substance-use-trends>
6. As 2020 Closes Many Questions Remain About Youth Substance Use Trends, id.

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## What The New Democratic-Controlled Senate Means For Federal Marijuana Legalization In 2021

Jan. 2021, retrieved from: <https://www.marijuanamoment.net/what-the-new-democratic-controlled-senate-means-for-federal-marijuana-legalization-in-2021/>

The Senate will vote to pass a bill to federally legalize marijuana within the next two years. ...

Because Democrats have now reclaimed control of the chamber, those chances are significantly bolstered. Senate leadership in the 116th Congress had declined repeated opportunities to hold votes on marijuana reform legislation. Outgoing Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) in particular has been an adamant opponent of loosening federal laws on marijuana....

Democrats are now poised to advance any number of more substantial cannabis bills, including those calling for the end of federal marijuana prohibition.... Sen.-elect Jon Ossoff (D-GA), who defeated Sen. David Perdue (R-GA), said he will push for the policy change in the Senate—and he made that proposal part of his pitch to young people on social media. Sen.-elect Raphael Warnock (D-GA), who ousted Sen. Kelly Loeffler (R-GA), has frequently discussed the failures of the war on drugs and his support for cannabis reform. ...

The House, which remains in Democratic control albeit with a reduced majority after November's elections, has already made clear that it's ready for federal marijuana policy change.