COVID-19
Substance Use and Misuse Prevention Guidance

Updated Aug. 14, 2020

Please note: As the COVID-19 pandemic is constantly evolving, this guidance document may not be an exhaustive resource for Substance Use and Misuse Prevention providers. The FAQ document located at the link below is updated when new information is available, so please routinely review it.


HHSC realizes that substance use and misuse prevention programs are deeply rooted in communities across Texas, and as public health concerns increase, it is incumbent upon HHSC to provide guidance to ensure the safety of the prevention workforce and the community in which your organization provides services. HHSC wishes to remain vigilant in its support of substance use and misuse prevention programs and feels it is imperative that it suspend required contractual performance measures until the COVID-19 pandemic can be further evaluated and the threat to public health is mitigated.

Outlined below are related impacts and HHSC’s expectations and recommendations regarding substance use and misuse prevention programs, including Youth Prevention Indicated (YPI), Youth Prevention Selective (YPS), Youth Prevention Universal (YPU), Community Coalition Partnerships (CCP), Prevention Resource Centers (PRC), and Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnerships for Success (SPF-PFS) programs.

While HHSC is making recommendations on specific performance measures, it is up to the organization to identify ways their workforce can continue to reach and impact the community in other areas, if the organization has the capacity to do so. Of course, organizations are advised to follow the recommendations set forth by Gov. Greg Abbott, specific guidelines from their local public health departments, and those of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Texas Department of State Health Services.

Performance Measures

HHSC intends to suspend the enforcement of certain performance measures that require face-to-face interaction related to all prevention contracts from March 15,
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2020, until further notice. Organizations that have the capacity should continue to provide prevention engagement services utilizing web-based and/or media platforms — including agency websites, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and any other traditional media platform — to educate and mobilize the community and promote health and wellness during this challenging time.

HHSC recommends all services be provided in accordance with local health directives and CDC guidelines and recommendations. In addition, HHSC encourages organizations to prioritize the safety of staff and community members participating in prevention activities and strategies. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is considered an allowable expense for staff and participants. Prevention services via virtual platforms, such as Google Classroom and Zoom, are allowable methods of engagement. Additional guidance on allowable expenditures specific to COVID-19 can be found on the Behavioral Health Services COVID-19 FAQ (PDF).

Performance Measures Not Affected

HHSC intends to continue reporting the following performance measures for the specified programs:

YPU, YPS, YPI

- Number of social media messages related to the statewide media campaign.

CCP

- Number of media awareness activities focused on the state’s four prevention priorities and the statewide media campaign.
- Number of social media messages focused on the state’s four prevention priorities and the statewide media campaign.
- Number of media contacts focused on the state’s four prevention priorities.

PRC
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- Number of media awareness activities focused on the state’s four prevention priorities and the statewide media campaign.
- Number of social media messages focused on the state’s four prevention priorities and the statewide media campaign.
- Number of media contacts focused on the state’s four prevention priorities.
- Number of prevention trainings coordinated or hosted in the region (all must be web-based).
- Number of adults attending trainings coordinated or hosted in the region (all must be web-based).

Areas and Activities Specifically Affected

YP Programs

HHSC supports communities in teaching curricula lessons virtually in accordance with the guidance established by the curriculum developer. For more information on current developer guidance, please visit texaspreventiontraining.org. HHSC is working with C.A.R.E. Consulting to update resources as they become available. HHSC encourages the use of the Virtual Activity Tracking Tool to document modified prevention services that organizations are implementing within the community to suit virtual delivery. To better meet reporting requirements moving forward, HHSC is collaboratively working to establish guidance around data reporting/form usage requirements and performance measures other than those related to social and media awareness campaigns, so these should also be reported in the Clinical Management for Behavioral Health Services (CMBHS) data system. HHSC will distribute this guidance for fiscal year 2021 through usual communication methods, such as distribution lists and the prevention forums. HHSC will not enforce contractual requirements around pre- and post-tests at this time but defers to curriculum developers for the implementation and specific requirements related to curriculum pre- and post-tests.

Tobacco Coordinators
HHSC encourages Prevention Resource Centers to consider all guidance from local health authorities/departments, state and federal recommendations, and CDC recommendations when determining whether to conduct voluntary tobacco retailer compliance checks.

**Data Coordinators**

Regional Needs Assessment (RNA) development, data-gathering and other administrative functions related to the RNA may be conducted remotely and in coordination with HHSC.

**Reporting**

- Prevention performance measures related to media should continue to be reported in CMBHS by the 15th of the month following the month being reported, as outlined in the statement of work.

- Organizations should document community service barriers and challenges, which may include school and district closures, business closures and an inability to access participants in schools or other community sites, etc.

- YPU, YPS, YPI — The date for submitting the required summer term Curriculum Implementation Plan (CIP) will not change at this time.

- CCP — The required CCP Implementation Plan and related documentation, due March 30, 2020, is postponed until further notification by HHSC.

- PRC — The required fiscal year 2020 RNA will be due Aug. 31, 2020, and must be posted to the organization’s website no later than 30 days after receiving HHSC approval of the RNA.

**Suggested Activities**

- Virtual activities and events via Instagram, Facebook and other social media platforms can be used to engage the community and promote positive, healthy choices.

- Posting of statewide and local media content on organizational Facebook and Instagram platforms is encouraged.
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• HHSC encourages organizations to contact their assigned program specialist to strategize any unique options for virtual service delivery. Once approved, these methods and activities may be shared on the prevention forums to further their implementation and reach.

Training

The HHSC Texas Prevention Training (TPT) entity, C.A.R.E Consulting along with public relations coordinators, are working together to provide and promote online training opportunities so the prevention workforce may continue to build capacity and prepare to support communities. Web-based trainings — such as the 15-hour Prevention Skills, Prevention Ethics and ASK About Suicide courses — will occur as scheduled at this time.

In addition, the prevention workforce may still access web-based versions of the Positive Action, Botvin LifeSkills and Strengthening Families (7-17) curriculum trainings, all scheduled on the TPT website.

Organizations are encouraged to continue monitoring the TPT website at texaspreventiontraining.org. Public relations coordinators are also encouraged to continue utilizing web-based and social media platforms to engage and inform the community on prevention and other behavioral health-related information and trainings.

Finally, the TPT contractor has posted several web-based training opportunities that are of importance at this time, including Psychological First Aid, the LivingWorks Start suicide prevention training and others on the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services.