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Subject: [External]Survey Results: COVID-19 Affecting Access to Addiction Treatment and Key Services
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Survey: COVID-19 Affecting Access to Addiction Treatment and Key Services

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June 9, 2020

Individuals with a substance use disorder (SUD) are finding it challenging to continue needed services during the pandemic, from recovery support meetings, SUD treatment, and naloxone services to reverse an overdose, new survey results indicate.

Addiction Policy Forum conducted a pilot study to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on individuals with a SUD and to inform future research. A web-based survey was administered to our network of patients, families and survivors between April 27 and May 8, 2020. The survey was completed by 1,079 SUD patients and impacted individuals whose responses were included in the analyses for this research report.

Key Takeaways:

- 1 in 3 (34%) of the 1,079 respondents reported changes or disruptions in accessing treatment or recovery support services.
    - 14% say they were unable to receive their needed services and
    - 2% say they were unable to access naloxone services.
- 20% of respondents reported increased substance use since the COVID-19 pandemic began.
- Nationwide, 4% of respondents report an overdose has occurred since the pandemic began. The South Atlantic region reported the greatest number and percent of overdoses.
- The top emotions reported by respondents are worry (62%), sadness (51%), fear (51%) and loneliness (42%).
- 87% of those who report access disruptions (n=266) also report emotional changes since the pandemic began, compared to 72% of those who do not report access disruptions (n=806).
- 48% of patients and families reported fear of becoming infected with COVID-19 as a top concern, followed by spreading the virus (46%) and social isolation (40%).

“The COVID-19 pandemic creates significant challenges for those struggling with addiction,” said Jessica Hulsey, president of the Addiction Policy Forum. “From patients in treatment, to those in recovery to family members and caregivers, too many are struggling with disruptions in care. The data show that the presence of continuous stress and triggers and absence of coping and support mechanisms are coinciding with emotional distress. This may equate to an increase in relapses and overdoses nationwide.”

“This research provides insight into the experiences of patients and impacted individuals on the emotional and health consequences of COVID-19, including overdose rates and barriers in safely accessing care during the COVID-19 pandemic," added Hulsey. "We need to enhance services to better meet the needs of our community.”

The study was conducted with contract funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, part of the National Institutes of Health.

Read Full Report

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