



CITY, COUNTY, AND STATE NEWS

NEW YORK CITY, NY: *About 170,000 New York City Department of Education (DOE) employees and their families will have more access to mental health and social services:* Mayor Bill de Blasio, Schools Chancellor Richard A. Carranza and Office of Labor Relations Commissioner Renee Campion announced the expanded access of New York City Employee Assistance Program (NYC EAP) services to DOE employees and their families. The program delivers comprehensive services to all employees to help overcome problems that affect the quality of life and interfere with effectiveness on the job. It provides education, information, counseling, and individualized referrals to assist with a wide range of personal and social problems.

AURORA, CO: *Marijuana Tax Increase to Fund Mental Health Programs:* Aurora City Council passed a 1% increase in the City's marijuana sales tax to fund mental health organizations. The proposal for the marijuana tax increase stems from a decision by Aurora voters to remove the city's red light traffic cameras in 2018, which was generating around \$2 million in city revenue per year that went toward several mental health and safety organizations. With that money gone, the city council's marijuana committee has considered marijuana sales as a way to help restore financial support for these programs. According to city projections, raising the marijuana tax would generate about \$1 million annually in tax revenue; the increase would add less than 50 cents on to most purchases.

COLUMBUS, OH: *Columbus to get another opioid rapid response team:* Columbus City Council is expected to approve a one-year grant to fund its second opioid response unit, which will respond within 48 hours of an overdose with addiction-support services across Franklin County. The city of Columbus will create its second Rapid Response Emergency Addiction Crisis Team, designed to follow up with overdose survivors who decline further services and attempt to link them with treatment and recovery support, under a plan expected to be approved by the city council on Monday evening. The RREACT teams, made up of a Columbus firefighter, a police officer and a case manager specializing in substance abuse who will travel in a grant-funded patient-transport vehicle, "go out into the community and do face-to-face follow up visits with substance users revived from opioid overdose by police or fire first responders but (who) then refuse immediate transport to clinical facilities," bypassing treatment and recovery resources made available through emergency rooms, the city ordinance says.

FLORHAM PARK, NJ: *Florham Park Schools Launch SEL Training Program:* Florham Park Public Schools Superintendent, Dr. Steven Caponegro, announced the launch of NextMark Teacher Training on Student Mental Health in the classroom for Florham Park educators to begin March 2020, becoming the first school district in Morris County to commit to this teacher training program. The NextMark Teacher Training Program educates staff on how to recognize student mental health issues in the classroom and provides real life practical strategies to manage and shape student behaviors. The program focuses on

five of the most common mental health issues educators face in the class including Anxiety Disorders, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Mood Disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorders and Oppositional Defiant Disorders.

LANSING, MI: *Mayor Andy Schor announces new mental health task force in Lansing:* The mayor announced that the city is going to create a mental health task force, made up of different people who deal with mental health issues around the city. According to the mayor, the list includes people at both McLaren Greater Lansing Hospital, Sparrow Hospital, people who work at Community Mental Health Authority, the city's social worker, as well as members of the Lansing Police Department and other city staffers. The mayor says he doesn't plan to put in city funds to form the task force, but rather, it's about getting everyone in the same room.

PHILADELPHIA, PA: *Philadelphia's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) has deployed a workforce strategy to partner with individuals with lived experience to engage opioid overdose survivors and facilitate warm hand-offs (WHO) to behavioral health treatment:* Individuals with lived experience participate in training to become Certified Recovery Specialists (CRS). DBHIDS first launched the Recovery Overdose Survivor Engagement (ROSE) Program, which employs CRS, at Temple Episcopal Emergency Department (ED) and Crisis Response Center (CRC) in December 2017. CRS serve as mentors, role models, advocates, and educators. They engage individuals and build a rapport to connect them to treatment and/or recovery support services directly from the ED or CRC. If the individual does not want their help immediately, which is sometimes the case for individuals who have overdosed, they exchange contact information and continue to follow-up until the individual is ready to access treatment and services. In September 2018, this program expanded to the Temple Main campus. DBHIDS plans to partner with all of the Philadelphia Emergency Departments (17) and the Crisis Response Centers (6) with the provision of a WHO process. To make this a reality, DBHIDS surveyed Philadelphia EDs and CRCs to learn about their warm handoff processes and asked them to identify any outstanding needs in Spring 2019. We also were able to discuss, with the ED and CRC Directors, what WHO processes are currently established, and their vision for either the creation or expansion of a WHO process. DBHIDS requested, received, and reviewed proposals indicating what resources were needed from the EDs and CRCs. We have begun the next phase of our partnership process with the EDs and CRCs and are supporting the creation or expansion their WHO programs for opioid overdose survivors.

AIKEN COUNTY, SC: *Aiken County Schools working on new program to help young students overcome social-emotional learning challenges:* At the meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 25, the board unanimously voted to move forward with the program that is still in the planning stages, by allowing the school system to begin the hiring process for a program director. The program is called the Elementary Tier Three Behavior Intervention Program. The idea for the program is to have a temporary school for young students who are struggling to process social-emotional skills. Those students who have not made progress in the school's tier one and tier two plans will be transferred to the school temporarily, where they will have greater focus on social-emotional learning in addition to their regular coursework. After a director for the program is named, more specifics on the program will be made concrete and things will move forward.

OAKLAND COUNTY, MI: *Oakland County to offer primary care, behavioral, and mental health services at clinics:* Oakland Health 360 is a new initiative bringing together community healthcare providers, such as Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLHSA) and Honor Community Health, with the Oakland County Health Division to offer integrated services all under one roof to include general primary care,

family planning, dental care, mental and behavioral health, and other support services. Eventually, Honor Community Health will provide full-time primary and dental care services including those for behavioral and mental health.

ILLINOIS: *New Illinois bill would give students excused absences for mental health issues:* Illinois lawmakers are considering a bill that would put mental health on a par with physical health in the state's public schools. Senate Bill 2473 would give students five days of excused absences per school year for mental health issues. Students would be able to make up any missed school work.

MASSACHUSETTS: *State Senate has unveiled "An Act Addressing Barriers to Care for Mental Health" (Mental Health ABC Act):* The bill specifically targets mental health care delivery by removing barriers between patients and the care that they need. Specific changes contained within the bill include enforcing mental health parity laws, reforming medical necessity and prior authorization requirements from insurance carriers, standardizing credential forms, and creating a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner fellowship pilot program.

NEW YORK: *State to Ban Mental Health Question on State Bar Application:* New York State's court system will remove questions about mental health history from its bar application. The presence of mental health questions on the bar exam, and stigma around mental illness, have proven to be barriers to treatment within the legal profession, according to a New York State Bar Association report. The Conference of Chief Justices last year passed a resolution calling on its members, and state and territorial bar admission authorities to eliminate questions about mental health history from bar admission applications. New York would be one of several states including California, Connecticut, Louisiana, Virginia, and Washington to enact similar prohibitions.

EXECUTIVE

Federal Comment Opportunity: Developing a Workplace Supported Recovery Program: A Strategy for Assisting Workers and Employers With the Nation's Opioid and Substance Use Disorder Epidemics

- **Description:** The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), announces an opportunity to provide input on a NIOSH plan to develop resources and conduct research on the topic of Workplace Supported Recovery. Workplace Supported Recovery programs (WSRPs) assist workers and employers facing the nation's crisis related to the misuse of opioids and other drugs, and related substance use disorders.
- **Due Date:** April 27, 2020
- You can comment [here](#)

Federal Judge Approves First Supervised Injection Site in the US

- A federal judge in Philadelphia ruled in favor of a nonprofit that has been attempting to open a supervised injection site in that city for nearly two years, approving what would be the first facility of its kind in the U.S.
- The ruling follows a protracted legal battle between Safehouse and federal law enforcement officials
- United States District Court Judge Gerald McHugh issued a final ruling echoing his preliminary decision in October in favor of Safehouse, stating that the nonprofit’s goal is to “reduce drug use, not facilitate it.”
- U.S. Attorney William McSwain has said that he would continue to appeal the ruling because the site's plan violates the so-called crack house statute that prohibits knowingly opening or maintaining an establishment for manufacturing or distributing controlled substances

States Reject Settlement Offer from Drug Distributors

- A group of 21 state attorneys general has rebuffed an \$18 billion settlement offer from the country's largest drug distributors over their alleged role fueling the opioid epidemic
- The states rejected a framework brokered by four bipartisan attorneys general with AmerisourceBergen, McKesson and Cardinal Health, who have been accused of not monitoring the amount of prescription painkillers distributed across the country
- The holdout states are seeking is between \$22 billion and \$32 billion from companies
- The offer followed a settlement last October between two Ohio counties, distributors and manufacturers over opioid claims

HOUSE

Rep. Ann Kuster and Brian Fitzpatrick Announced the Bipartisan Opioid Task Force’s 2020 Legislative Agenda

- The Bipartisan Opioid Task Force led by Representatives Annie Kuster (D-NH) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), unveiled the Task Force’s 2020 legislative agenda to respond to the opioid and substance misuse epidemic. The agenda outlines commonsense, bipartisan legislation that would address the opioid epidemic by bolstering prevention, treatment and recovery, and law enforcement efforts. The agenda also takes on the criminal justice and economic hurdles that have contributed to the growth of the crisis.
- The full legislative agenda is available [here](#)

The House passed the following legislation this week:

- H.R.2227 - Gold Star Spouses and Spouses of Injured Servicemembers Leasing Relief Expansion Act of 2019
- H.R.3749 - Legal Services for Homeless Veterans Act
- H.R.4613 - VA Reporting Transparency Act
- H.R.4852 - GIVE Act
- H.R.561 - Protecting Business Opportunities for Veterans Act of 2019
- H.R.1492 - Yucca House National Monument Expansion Act
- H.R.2427 - Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Watertrails Network Reauthorization Act of 2019
- H.R.2819 - Gold Star Families National Monument Extension Act
- H.R.3399 - To amend the Nutria Eradication and Control Act of 2003 to include California in the program, and for other purposes.
- H.R.35 - Emmett Till Antilynching Act
- H.R.473 - To authorize the Every Word We Utter Monument to establish a commemorative work in the District of Columbia and its environs, and for other purposes
- H.R.560 - Northern Mariana Islands Residents Relief Act
- H.R.2339 - Reversing the Youth Tobacco Epidemic Act of 2019
- H.R.497 - BRAVE Act of 2019

IN OTHER NEWS

Mental Health America Releases 2020 State of Mental Health Rankings

- For the 6th year in a row, Mental Health America (MHA) released its annual State of Mental Health Report
- Here are the top takeaways from the State of Mental Health Report in America, ranking all 50 states and the District of Columbia
 - Major Depressive Episode (MDE) in youth has increased more than 4% in the last six years, with more than two million youth now having depression with severe impairment. Moreover, depression in youth often co-exists with other disorders such as substance use, substance abuse, anxiety, and disorderly behavior.
 - An estimated 13% of youth report suffering from at least one MDE in the past year – with Oregon reporting the most youth with MDE at more than 16%. Even worse, amongst youth in the U.S. with MDE, only 28% were receiving consistent treatment – meaning more than 70% are left untreated.
 - More than 10 million adults are estimated to have had serious suicidal thoughts – a jump of more than 450,000 people from last year’s data.
 - Drug and alcohol use and abuse vary greatly by state. For example, prevalence of substance use disorder (SUD) ranges from 6.32% in Georgia to 11.55% in the

District of Columbia. It did however decreased slightly, nationally, from 8.46% to 7.68% between 2012 and 2017. But use of substances – prescription, legal and otherwise – is highly correlated with mental health illness for adults and young people.

- Although more Americans are insured, coverage is proving deficient. Unmet need for mental health treatment in youth and adults is still lacking. More than 10 million adults reported an unmet need for care. Further, it was estimated that the proportion of youth who had private insurance, but were not covered for mental or emotional difficulties, almost doubled.
- When it comes to state rankings, 15 measures were included to determine the rates of prevalence for mental illness and access to care. And based on overall rankings, it appears that Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Maryland score as the top five states for mental health in America. However, when looking at adults only, the top five states were Hawaii, Iowa, Minnesota, New York, and Maryland. Interestingly, for youth the top five states for mental health were D.C., Pennsylvania, North Dakota, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. In contrast, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, Oregon, and Nevada were rated lowest in the overall state rankings. For adults only, these states remained consistent. Youth were slightly different however, adding Alaska and South Carolina to the bottom five states for mental health.

Blue Cross Blue Shield Analysis Shows Early-onset dementia and Alzheimer's diagnoses spike by 200%

- A [new analysis](#) of claims data from Blue Cross Blue Shield finds that diagnoses for early-onset dementia and Alzheimer's disease combined have risen by 200% since 2013
- BCBS looked at data from insurance claims for diagnostic tests filed between 2013-2017 for those ages 30-64
- Those ages 30-44 saw a 373% increase in disease diagnoses in 2017 compared to four years prior, and those ages 45-54 saw a 311% increase. In 2017, more than 37,000 individuals were diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's disease

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Report Shows Social Isolation Serious Public Health Threat

- A [new report](#) from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and funded by the AARP Foundation finds that older adults who are socially isolated are at an increased risk of depression and heart disease
- Here's more:

- Nearly a quarter of adults aged 65 and older are socially isolated, and more than a third of adults aged 45 and older report feeling lonely
- Social isolation is associated with an increased risk of premature death. Poor social relationships are also associated with a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased stroke risk
- The report authors suggest including social isolation and loneliness as assessment measures in EHRs so physicians can look out for it as a risk factor. Another suggestion is that agencies like the NIH fund research looking at the health effects of isolation.

New Data Shows Marijuana Usage Among Older Adults has Nearly Doubled

- As more states have legalized marijuana for recreational and medical use, the percentage of adults aged 65 and older who report using the substance has nearly doubled since 2015, according to a [new analysis](#)
- Looking at data from a federal survey on drug use, researchers [found](#) that the proportion of older adults who reported using marijuana in 2015 was 2.4%, but that increased to 4.2% in 2018
- The increase was more pronounced in males and in those who were non-white
- The shift in marijuana use is also trending toward the more wealthy: There was a more than threefold increase among college-educated individuals as well as among those whose family income was at least \$75,000
- Those who had sought mental health treatment in the year prior to being surveyed as well as those who reported tobacco use in the previous year also saw big increases

New Research Shows Medication-based Addiction Treatment Led to Sharp Reduction in Overdose Deaths

- Anti-opioid medication may be more effective in preventing overdoses and deaths from drug use than psychotherapy, according to [new research](#).
- Looking at data from nearly 50,000 adults who were treated for opioid use disorder between 2015-2016 at outpatient facilities in Maryland, researchers found that those who were given medications such as methadone or buprenorphine — which are used to treat opioid addiction — were 82% less likely to die of overdoses than those who only underwent therapy, which is most often offered as a treatment option
- However, after being discharged from treatment programs, both sets of patients had an equally high risk — more than fivefold — of dying from overdoses

- The authors therefore suggest that efforts to combat opioid addiction ought to ensure that those with opioid use disorder can access long-term medication-based treatment

New Analysis of U.S Mortality Data Shows Alcohol Related Deaths Increasing

- The rate of alcohol-related deaths has accelerated in recent years, according to a [new analysis](#) of U.S. mortality data between 2000-2016.
- Here's more:
 - Overall trends: There were more than 425,000 alcohol-induced deaths during the study period. The annual percentage change in such deaths increased among both men and women, but rose significantly starting in 2012.
 - Demographics: Starting in 2012, men experienced a 4.2% annual increase in alcohol-related deaths. From 2013-2016, women experienced an annual percentage increase of around 7%. American Indian and Alaska Native women experienced the highest increases over the 17-year study period.
 - Causes: Alcoholic liver disease accounted for the majority of deaths among men and women, followed by mental or physical disorders due to alcohol and accidental poisoning.

Crisis Text Line Report Shows Depression, stress about relationships are major reasons why people text for help

- The nonprofit Crisis Text Line, which provides crisis counseling via text, is out with [a report](#) that found that since the service's launch in 2013, depression is the top issue that people reach out for help with.
- Here's more:
 - Overall trends: Crisis Text Line counselors have sent more than 129 million texts to users since the nonprofit's inception. Depression is the top issue, making up 40% of messages sent to the text line, while a third of texts had to do with people's anxiety.
 - State-level trends: California, Texas, and New York had the most number of users reaching out to Crisis Text Line, with more than 100,000 people in each state.
 - Demographics: Some 36% of those who used the service were aged 14-17, followed by those 18-24. Nearly 80% of those who reached out identified as genderqueer, while men outnumbered women by nearly 6 to 1.

WEEKEND READING

Forbes: [How This Barber Uses His Shop To Improve Black Men's Mental Health](#)

The Players Tribune: [Where is my Mind?](#)

US News: [More Evidence Links Social Media Use to Poorer Mental Health in Teens](#)

Wall Street Journal: [Young Workers Seek Mental Health Accommodations, Employers Try to Keep Up](#)

Kaiser Health News: [Finding Connections and Comfort at the Local Cafe](#)

STAT: [What an 1890s opioid epidemic can teach us about ending addiction today](#)

The information compiled in this email originated from various news sources including: Politico, Axios, Vox, The Hill, Modern Healthcare, Stat, and Kaiser Health News