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Department of Health
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Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

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DHSS releases Medication Assisted Treatment Guide to assist providers in implementing opioid treatment services

Dec. 20, 2019 – The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) has released a new resource for health care providers in Alaska to assist them in offering office-based, medication assisted treatment (MAT) services for opioid use disorder (OUD).

Medication assisted treatment has been proven to work in the treatment of opioid use disorders in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies. Three medications are approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration: buprenorphine, methadone and naltrexone. This guide focuses on helping providers understand how to develop MAT programs that offer buprenorphine and naltrexone treatment in conjunction with psychosocial treatment and support.

“This is a much-needed resource that will make it easier for health care providers to understand the steps to implementing medication assisted treatment,” said Dr. Anne Zink, chief medical officer for DHSS. “MAT is the most effective current treatment for opioid addiction and increasing access to these services is an important step in addressing Alaska’s opioid epidemic. I thank the current MAT providers, and others across the continuum of care, who are already helping people achieve and sustain recovery. I encourage anyone else interested in expanding their practices to use this guide.”

The *Medication Assisted Treatment Guide* outlines a comprehensive approach to treating and supporting individuals with OUD, including how to choose the most appropriate medication, best practices for implementing a MAT program, and how to treat special populations such as pregnant women, youth and individuals involved in the criminal justice system.

A panel of experts from the health care and behavioral health fields created the guide to address the limited access to community-based, medication assisted treatment for opioid addiction. The team is led by Kathryn Chapman, the State Opioid Treatment Authority in the Division of Behavioral Health, and included significant contributions from the clinical and operational staff in the Division of Health Care Services; Dr. Sarah Spencer, a physician on the

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Kenai Peninsula with experience in addiction medicine; and Dr. Mark Simon, an emergency medicine physician at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital.

“This guide is the result of an enormous amount of work by many people willing to share their expertise and experiences in how best to implement and deliver MAT services,” said Kathryn Chapman. “Our goal is to empower providers across Alaska to offer MAT services in their communities so Alaskans can more easily access addiction treatment where they live.”

The guide offers providers best practices on how to:

- Choose the most appropriate medication.
- Deliver services in a variety of clinical settings. Topics addressed include staffing, training, billing, treatment, induction, behavioral health supports and program evaluation.
- Meet federal and state requirements for prescribing buprenorphine and naltrexone.
- Use telehealth technologies to provide services in rural and remote locations.
- Treat special populations such as pregnant women, youth and individuals involved in the criminal justice system.

It also provides guidance on other considerations such as, strategies to reduce harm in individuals who continue to use opioids, confidentiality of patient records, communications, stigma and voluntary non-opioid directives.

The guide is available to read and download on the Division of Behavioral Health’s website at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Pages/Initiatives/EvidenceBasedPractices/MAT.aspx>.

For more information about opioids, medication assisted treatment and substance use management visit:

- [Opioids in Alaska](#)
- [Treatment Connection](#)
- [SAMHSA: Medication-Assisted Treatment \(MAT\)](#)
- [University of California San Francisco Clinician Consultation Center](#)

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