

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Division of Pharmacologic Therapies (DPT)
Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT)

Guidance on pharmacotherapy for opioid use disorder (OUD) availability in circumstances in which patients may be exposed to highly contagious infectious agents (such as COVID-19)

The United States is currently working to minimize spread of the highly contagious COVID-19 virus. Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) are programs providing essential medication to individuals with OUD. Many attending OTPs for treatment of OUD present at the OTP daily to receive medication for their OUD. In circumstances in which a patient(s) have symptoms of infection (fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath) or in which they may have been in contact with someone who has such symptoms or has been diagnosed as having COVID-19 infection; it is important that the individual(s) not attend the OTP, but as importantly, that they continue to receive their medication to treat their OUD.

The following guidance is a suggested course for assuring to the greatest extent possible the safety of patients and healthcare providers.

- States are responsible for regulating OTPs in their jurisdictions. Therefore, each State Opioid Treatment Authority (SOTA) is responsible for working with the OTPs within their state to develop and implement a disaster plan to address COVID-19. For additional guidance on developing and implementing disaster plans, please refer to TAP 34: Disaster Planning Handbook for Behavioral Health Treatment Programs:

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/TAP-34-Disaster-Planning-Handbook-for-Behavioral-Health-Treatment-Programs/SMA13-4779>

- All disaster plans need to be consistent with all applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Disaster plans should be reassessed as the situation develops and new approval sought from the SOTA when indicated.
- Disaster plans shall not include any blanket exceptions for clinic closure and/or take-home medication for all patients to include patients who do not qualify for take-home/unsupervised use of opioid pharmacotherapies. Appropriate alternatives compliant with state and federal guidelines for dosing should be arranged for patients who are not eligible for take-home medication.
- OTPs should direct specific questions about operations under the circumstances related to COVID-19 or other such pathogens in the future to their state agencies. SAMHSA provides general guidance regarding OTP regulation and operation, but specific questions must be addressed by the SOTA in the specific jurisdiction in which the program is located. SAMHSA will not answer specific questions about program disaster plans or operation of programs.