

Tony Evers
Governor



Roger Frings
Chairperson

Sandy Hardie
Vice-Chairperson

Kevin Florek
Secretary

State of Wisconsin

State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse

1 West Wilson Street, P.O. Box 7851
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7851

May 28, 2021

To Interested Parties:

On behalf of the State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (SCAODA), I am pleased to provide you with a copy of the final report and recommendations from the Intervention and Treatment Committee, *At-Risk Substance Use in Older Adults -- Sounding the Alarm*.

Substance use disorders (SUD) among adults age 60 and older, particularly of alcohol and prescription drugs, is one of the fastest growing public health problems facing the country. This problem reflects, in part, the relatively higher drug use rates of the baby boomer generation compared with previous generations. Thus, there is a cohort of older adults who may experience the negative consequences of substance use, including physical and mental health issues, social and family problems, involvement with the criminal justice system, and death from drug overdose. This is especially worrisome in Wisconsin, which is aging rapidly and will continue to do so over the next 20 years. In Wisconsin, adults aged 60 and older binge drink and drink heavily more than the national average for this population. Substance use (including alcohol and tobacco) in Wisconsin's older adult population will likely lead to a staggering need for substance use disorder treatment services at all levels, and our current treatment delivery system is not adequately prepared to provide these services.

The Intervention and Treatment Committee formed the Workgroup on At-Risk Substance Use in Older Adults in 2018 to gather relevant data and information on this growing but often unrecognized problem through a variety of public and private resources. To gain a broader perspective of the scope of the problem and other relevant programs already in place, workgroup members conducted 'key informant' interviews and sought input from treatment and service providers serving older adults in Wisconsin.

This report is the Intervention and Treatment Committee's 'Call to Action' and its attempt to underscore the critical need to formulate a plan of action now for the identification, referral to treatment and provision of 'age-specific' SUD treatment for our older Wisconsin adults. An overview of the Workgroup's recommendations is located on the backside of this letter. If you have any questions about this report, please contact Workgroup chair, Joe Muchka, at joemuchka@mac.com. If you or others would like additional copies of this report, it is available online at <https://scaoda.wisconsin.gov/adhoccommitteereports.htm>.

Sincerely,

Roger Frings

Roger Frings
Chairperson, SCAODA

Cc: Governor Tony Evers
Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake
Deputy Secretary Julie Willems Van Dijk

www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/scaoda/index.htm

Overview of Recommendations

<p>Incorporate Brief Therapy Models of care to identify 'At risk' behaviors in older adults that could lead to a substance use disorder, similar to the BRITE Project.</p>
<p>Create a public awareness campaign to inform the public, health care organizations and other agencies that provide services to older adults about the impact certain substances can have on their health and risk of accidents (Falls, driving under the influence, etc.). It's recommended that SAMHSA's 'Get Connected' evidence-based tool kit be utilized as a resource in this effort, amongst others that might also be appropriate.</p>
<p>Fund a statewide training and education initiative embracing SAMHSA's 'Get Connected' program, utilizing WINTIP's provider training program, consulting with the UW-Extension's counselor education faculty teaching 'best practice' in the treatment of substance use disorders in older adults and in coordination with both public and private service providers of older adults.</p>
<p>With state aid, form a greater consortium of health care providers, treatment and prevention professionals, members of the public, public and private sector service providers of care for older adults, etc. to continue research into 'best practices', create a 'Wisconsin Model' for identifying, referring and treating substance use disorders in older adults.</p>
<p>Provide financial support through competitive grants to treatment providers to develop and refine 'age- appropriate' programs for substance abuse treatment and family support services for older 'At risk' adults. This would be in keeping with the 'Older Americans Act Title III-D: Evidence-Based Health Promotion Programs as outlined in the 'State of Wisconsin Aging Plan for Older People – Federal Fiscal 2019-2021.'</p>
<p>Given the substance abuse prevention and treatment needs of older adults and the lack of awareness of the risks to their health and well-being, include this unmet need in grant applications to fund prevention programs utilizing the Department of Health Service's Block Grant requirement to use 20% of the grant's funding for prevention.</p>
<p>Work with WISAM to provide awareness to its members, brief intervention strategies and treatment options available to patients and their families in Wisconsin. (Reference BRITE Project).</p>
<p>Provide funding to explore 'telehealth' and other 'virtual' care options for brief intervention, treatment and the 'distribution' of information, for those older adults who are home-bound, disabled, blind, deaf or hearing-impaired, who may be 'at risk' for substance misuse.</p>