

## **Prevention and the COVID-19 Pandemic Part 2:** **Preparing for the Future and Learning Lab**

### **Summary of Learning Lab Conversations**

*The following is a summary of the key points participants brought up in response to the facilitated discussion questions.*

1. What are the biggest substance use-related changes you've seen in your community?
  - a. Continued expansion of vaping stores and cannabis dispensaries
  - b. Increased access to alcohol
  - c. Mental health issues increasing in young people (anxiety, depression, isolation)
  - d. Perceptions towards marijuana continuing to trend to acceptance
  - e. Increased marijuana and alcohol use
  - f. Less visibility or contact with youth making it more difficult to assess needs
  - g. Positive change: The success of a new anti-stigma campaign
  - h. Positive change: Rural areas seeing an increase in service delivery due to use of virtual outreach and program implementation
2. What service delivery challenges have you faced?
  - a. Limited access to key populations, especially youth
  - b. Community members still insisting that naloxone is not needed
  - c. Community resistance to harm reduction as a concept
  - d. Virtual contact increasing access to some populations, but also increasing fatigue and hindering some service delivery
  - e. Difficulty engaging people
  - f. Smaller organizations disproportionately impacted when someone goes on extended leave due to COVID
3. Have new state or federal policies affected your communities or your ability to provide services?
  - a. Increased access to alcohol, especially for youth
4. How has your ability to collect data been impacted?
  - a. Biennial surveys delayed a year
  - b. In-person data collection shifted to virtual
  - c. Data collection for younger children not always occurring after shifting to virtual
  - d. Concern that youth may be less truthful due to fears that parents will overhear them on virtual calls or monitor their devices
  - e. Concern about ability to make comparisons to prior years of data

5. Have you undertaken any innovative service approaches due to the pandemic? / Are there new technologies, tools, or other resources or approaches you plan to start or expand using?
  - a. Providing access to virtual meetings from schools to facilitate youth participation
  - b. Using interactive games and online resources (YouTube, Jeopardy, Kahoot, Wheel of Fortune) as well as community virtual viewing parties
  - c. Youth-led projects to promote mental health through music, videos, and media campaigns
  - d. Working with law enforcement to adapt alcohol compliance check guidelines and procedures during the pandemic
  - e. Continuing to build community as a resiliency and engagement tool
6. What state or federal policy changes would you like to see occur to better support your work?
  - a. Pull-back of the recent changes in alcohol delivery policies that expanded access
  - b. Continue to allow funding flexibility – allows providers and others to stay nimble, innovative, and best meet the current needs
  - c. Allow for continued hybrid and/or virtual model of service delivery
7. What is the biggest work-related lesson learned since the start of the pandemic that you would share with others?
  - a. “We’re more resilient than we originally gave ourselves credit for.”
  - b. “We’re not alone”, many others dealing with the same issues and experiences
  - c. Virtual meetings can work; attendance and participation has been higher
  - d. Virtual education is not always as successful though
  - e. Using social media to connect parenting groups and resolve issues in real-time
  - f. More insight into colleagues lives outside of work