DATE: April 24, 2017

TO: BPA Health Treatment Provider Network

FROM: Crystal Campbell, Program Specialist
Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Behavioral Health

SUBJECT: Coordinating Treatment and Prevention Services

Parents with a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) often have barriers to accessing treatment that are related to being a parent. Barriers such as childcare, time management, and guilt can make it difficult for parents to be fully engaged in treatment. In addition, research shows that children are more likely to have a SUD when there is a family history of substance use.\(^1\) Parents with a SUD expose their children to biological, psychological, and environmental risk, creating a family cycle of substance use disorders.

Offering prevention services to the children of parents receiving treatment service can help parents be successful in breaking the family cycle of SUD by reducing the psychological and environmental risks. Involving children may also help parents feel more engaged in the program when they see the direct benefits for their children.

A study titled “Family Systems Therapy for Substance-Using Mothers and Their 8- to 16-Year-Old Children” showed that women who involved their children in treatment reduced their usage of substances more quickly than those who did not involve their children\(^2\). Providing an environment which involves children in their parent’s treatment is an effective way to increase positive outcomes.

The Idaho Office of Drug Policy provides comprehensive SUD prevention programs in many communities. Prevention programs are delivered by professionally educated and trained prevention specialists. The following are examples of evidence-based programs that may be available in your area:

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• Positive Action – specific to Pre-Kindergarten to 4th grade. Sessions are 30 minutes for up to 22 sessions.
• Second Step Elementary School Program – specific to Kindergarten to 5th grade. Sessions are 20-40 minutes for 20 sessions.
• Project Alert – specific to 7th and 8th grade students. Sessions are 30 minutes for 11 sessions with 3 booster lessons in the second year.
• Toward No Drug Use – specific to adolescents from 15 to 17 years. Sessions are 40 minutes for 12 sessions and typically provided in a high school classroom.
• Class Action – specific to high school age adolescents. There are 8-10 group sessions in which students divide into teams to research, prepare, and present mock civil cases involving hypothetical persons harmed as a result of underage drinking.

Coordinating treatment services for the parent with prevention services for the child has the additional benefit of reducing the childcare barrier. Children would be engaged in a positive activity while their parents receive treatment. This would allow the parent to be more focused on their treatment and recovery without the added worry of finding childcare thereby improving treatment outcomes through more consistent participation in treatment.

Without services for children, it is possible to unwittingly undermine a parents’ recovery. For instance, if a ten-year-old has been raising her younger brother and sister, feeding and comforting them, it may be difficult for her to understand the new dynamics when her mom comes home clean and sober and takes over her jobs. She has no friends and does not know how to play. Chances are she will act out, increasing the stress at home, and making it more difficult for mom to remain in recovery. Preparing children for their parent’s recovery important, as is providing parenting education to parents.

For more information about prevention services and providers located in Idaho, please visit [https://prevention.odp.idaho.gov/](https://prevention.odp.idaho.gov/) or contact Marianne King at: Marianne.king@odp.idaho.gov.