



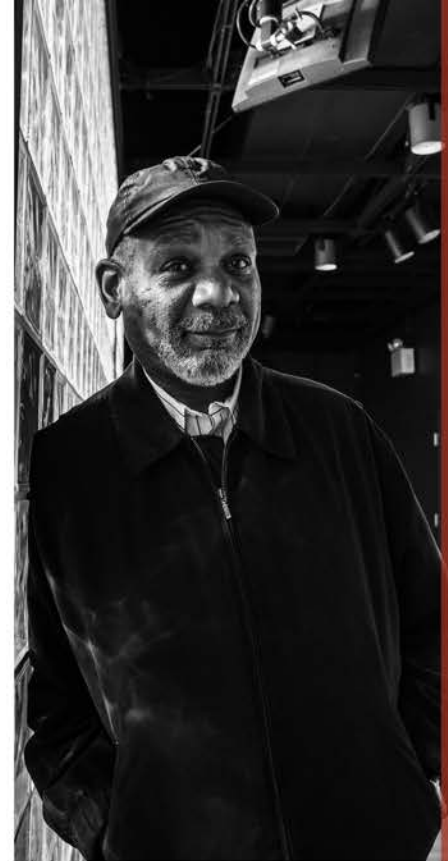
Providing Homes • Restoring Health • Reclaiming Lives

# OUD Treatment in the time of Covid

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[www.PathwaystoHousingPA.org](http://www.PathwaystoHousingPA.org)



# COVID-19 and people who use drugs

- Increased risk of severe illness
  - Underlying health conditions related to or unrelated to drug use
  - Multiple layers of co-morbidity
- Increased risk of overdose
  - Isolation and anxiety
  - Release from jail/prison w/o notice
- Increased risk of transmission
  - Overcrowding
  - Sharing of equipment
- Disruption in services
  - Treatment protocols rigid
  - Drug market less available



# Treatment Difficulties

- Difficult to advocate for people with elevated health risks to get take-home methadone
  - Even an “every other day” approach would decrease exposure to other people
- Prior auths for more than 16mg/day cause an enormous amount of work
  - Prevent us from using third party pharmacies
- Sublocade
  - Specialty pharmacies require patient verbal consent to ship EVERY MONTH
  - Our people often don’t have phones or minutes so we have to track them down on foot

# Challenges for People Actively Using

- Decrease in income needed to stay “well”
  - Less availability of informal jobs/panhandling
- Increased reliance on samples
  - When getting samples, whatever they are shooting is a lot less reliable
- Increased police surveillance and interference
  - Enforcing social distancing during the pandemic in certain neighborhoods

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# Creative on-the-ground Solutions

- Rapid interdisciplinary planning and work-flow modification to adapt to CDC recommendations and precautions – trained on and stocked PPE, restructured drop-in hours, launched tele-health, new delivery procedures w/ pharmacy
- Dedicated PCP to manage MAT concerns daily with regular urine drug screens medication is picked up
- Boosted access and inventory at on-site pantry helping with access to food, and ability to engage over something other than drugs or treatment
- No phone? Staff in the field can use FaceTime. Pathway's purchased 75 phones at the beginning of the pandemic

# Advantages of Telehealth

- Expansion of insurance reimbursement for telehealth appointments, now billable
- Allows for reimbursable telephonic BH consult with harm-reductive recovery planning
- Staff rotate who is on-site vs. remote to reduce exposure and risk
- Can actually increase continuity of care
- Time for population health management approaches