

From: **David C. Rose, MD, MBA, FAAP, Chair, State Health Commissioner's Advisory Council on Health Disparity & Health Equity (ACHDHE), Virginia Department of Health (VDH)**  
Date: October 10, 2023:

Subject: **ACHDHE Recommendations for Program Enhancement:**

In response to the July 11, 2023, presentation on "Virginia Medical Reserve Corps Mental Health Team" presented to the ACHDHE by **Michael Magner, State Volunteer Coordinator**, Office of Emergency Preparedness, VDH, we respectfully present the following recommendations:

- The Virginia Department of Health recognize the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) program as a valuable resource for addressing workforce shortages with flexibility. Leveraging the MRC program during public health disasters or emergencies can be particularly beneficial in fostering increased trust between the public health workforce and the community, enhance community engagement, strengthen outreach efforts, and improve overall emergency response capabilities.
- The VDH continue to excel in its efforts by ensuring that volunteers engaged in targeted outreach and health disparity reduction initiatives receive mandatory culturally appropriate health disparity training courses to enhance volunteers' understanding and sensitivity of diverse communities and promote a more effective and inclusive outreach efforts that ultimately contribute to reducing population health disparities.
- The Virginia Department of Health collects and monitors volunteers' demographic information to identify recruitment gaps that can lead to the creation of a more diverse group of volunteers that includes minority population groups: low-income, tribal groups, civic groups, and immigrant community members. Such initiative should include collaboration with other organizations, specifically Cooperative Extension offices, Virginia Tech, and Virginia State Universities.

In response to the July 11, 2023, presentation on "VDH Overdose Incident Management Team" presented to the ACHDHE by **Robert (Bob) Mauskapf, Director**, Office of Emergency, VDH, we respectfully present the following recommendations:

- The Virginia Department of Health focuses on supporting training (CME) opportunities for health care professionals on overdose awareness, management, and treatment as a pivotal action in both building community resiliency and effectively addressing the opioid crisis.
- The Virginia Department of Health actively seeks alternative methods to collect additional overdose demographic data related to sexual orientation and disability status using sources like Medicaid data and all-payer claims database to comprehensively understand the impact of overdoses on different demographic groups for a more targeted and effective interventions and policies to address the opioid crisis.
- The Virginia Department of Health seeks the best use of community metrics to assure that social determinants and issues of equity are part of priority setting for resource allocation.
- The Virginia Department of Health encourages diversity of the members on the Overdose Incident Management Team and engages faith-based organization and non-profit institutions in its overdose initiatives.

In response to the July 11, 2023, presentation on "VDH's Injury and Violent Prevention Programs Overview" presented to the ACHDHE by **Justin Wallace & Tara Keen**, Suicide Prevention Program, VDH, we respectfully present the following recommendations:

- The Virginia Department of Health prioritize the development of drug-related suicide prevention strategies to offer critical support and resources to individuals struggling with drug use, which not only helps them quit drug use but also positively impacts other health factors influenced by drug abuse.
- The Virginia Department of Health expand drug-related suicide data collection to include various demographic identifiers, such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, socioeconomic factors, and more, to identify health disparities, tailor interventions to specific populations, and design more equitable and inclusive outreach initiatives.

Signed: David C. Rose  
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