**Community Education and Development Plan**

**Goal:**

The goal of the Metro East Community Development Plan is to raise awareness of the services available within Metro East program, provide accurate information to the public, reduce stigma associated with opioid use disorder (OUD), behavioral health challenges, and medication assisted treated.

Improving a community doesn't always require money—it often requires time, energy, creativity, and a commitment to positive change. By organizing, volunteering, sharing skills, building social networks, and utilizing available resources, Metro East is making a lasting impact on the community.

Through collective effort neighborhoods can become stronger, more resilient, and more connected.

We encourage community-wide engagement in supporting individuals in recovery and those who aim to better themselves and the community in the following ways:

**1. Community Assessment and Stakeholder Engagement**

**Objective:**

To know the community’s needs and prepare the MAT/OTP and wellness services to meet them. Identify key stakeholders who can support the program, including healthcare providers, law enforcement, schools, faith-based organizations, local government, and advocacy groups.

**Actions:**

* **Community Health Survey:** Conduct surveys or focus groups with community members to gauge their awareness of substance use disorder (SUD) and MAT and wellness needs. Collect data on the level of stigma associated with OUD, MAT and wellness and identify gaps in community education.
* **Stakeholder Mapping:** Identify and engage with key stakeholders (e.g., local healthcare providers, schools, recovery groups, and social service agencies) to gather support for the program and foster partnerships.
* **Local Government Collaboration:** Work with local health departments, elected officials, and city councils to ensure that the program aligns with broader public health and community initiatives.

**2. Awareness Campaign**

**Objective:**
Educate the community about the availability, benefits, and success of MAT/OTP and wellness programs in treating substance use disorder. The campaign is designed to reach diverse community members, including those who may not yet be aware of the treatment options available.

**Actions:**

* **Media Outreach:** Use local newspapers, radio stations, and community TV to run advertisements or interviews explaining the program’s role in addressing the opioid crisis and the science behind MAT. Highlight patient success stories to humanize the issue.
* **Social Media Campaign:** Create social media posts, videos, and infographics to spread information about MAT, its effectiveness, and available local resources. Use hashtags and shareable content to reach broader audiences. Use social platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and others for reaching younger adults and local residents.
* **Public Service Announcements (PSAs):** Develop and distribute PSAs about MAT programs and opioid use disorder, highlighting available treatment options, access points, and resources for those in need.
* **Informational Brochures and Flyers:** Distribute educational materials at local clinics, pharmacies, libraries, schools, and community centers. These materials should explain what MAT is, how it works, and its benefits for individuals with opioid use disorder.

**3. Community Forums and Educational Events**

**Objective:**

Host informational sessions, workshops, and community forums to engage local residents and stakeholders directly, answer questions, and provide evidence-based information on MAT.

**Actions:**

* **Open Forums and Town Hall Meetings:** Organize town hall meetings where community members can learn about MAT programs from medical professionals, counselors, and individuals in recovery. Encourage open dialogue, provide accurate information, and address misconceptions about MAT.
* **Workshops for Professionals:** Provide workshops for local healthcare providers, schools, and social service agencies about MAT, opioid use disorder, and effective communication strategies for supporting individuals in recovery.
* **Recovery Stories:** Invite patients (or former patients) in recovery to share their personal success stories. This can help reduce stigma and encourage community members to view MAT as a valid and compassionate treatment option.
* **Educational Events in Schools and Universities:** Partner with local schools and universities to offer age-appropriate education on substance use, addiction, and treatment options. Programs can include presentations for students, faculty, and staff on identifying the signs of opioid use disorder and available treatment resources.

**4. Collaboration with Community Leaders and Organizations**

**Objective:**
Engage with key community leaders, including clergy, local business owners, educators, and recovery advocates, to help reduce stigma, promote MAT, and ensure that the program is integrated into broader community health efforts.

**Actions:**

* **Partnerships with Faith-Based Organizations:** Collaborate with local religious groups to provide support and awareness of MAT programs.
* **Community Health Alliances:** Partner with other community health organizations (e.g., mental health providers, HIV prevention groups, and needle exchange programs) to integrate MAT awareness into existing health outreach programs.
* **Training for First Responders:** Offer training for law enforcement, paramedics, and first responders on MAT, overdose prevention, and how to refer individuals to MAT programs.

**5. Reducing Stigma and Promoting Inclusivity**

**Objective:**

One of the most critical aspects of a community education plan is reducing the stigma around opioid use disorder and MAT. This involves creating a supportive environment that encourages people to seek treatment without fear of judgment or discrimination.

**Actions:**

* **Public Education on Addiction as a Disease:** Educate the community that opioid use disorder is a chronic medical condition, not a moral failing. Use materials that explain addiction in medical and scientific terms.
* **Support Groups and Peer Education:** Create peer-led support groups within the community where individuals in recovery can share their experiences and offer support to others. Peer education can be an effective way to build trust and reduce stigma.
* **Anti-Stigma Campaigns:** Launch campaigns that focus on breaking down the stereotypes and negative assumptions surrounding MAT and recovery. Include messages that MAT is a compassionate and scientifically-backed treatment option.

**6. Access and Referral Pathways**

**Objective:**

Ensure that the community knows how to access MAT services and is aware of the referral pathways for individuals who may need treatment.

**Actions:**

* **Clear Information on How to Access MAT:** Provide information in all educational materials about how individuals can access MAT, including how to make appointments, what to expect during treatment, and what insurance is accepted.
* **Hotlines and Helplines:** Call 1-888-810-0480 for more information about MAT or to receive a referral.
* **Integration into Other Social Services:** Ensure that MAT programs are part of the broader health and social service network in the community, including referrals from community health centers, hospitals, mental health agencies, and even legal systems.

**7. Monitoring and Feedback**

**Objective:**

Evaluate the effectiveness of the community education plan by collecting feedback and monitoring the engagement level of different community groups.

**Actions:**

* **Surveys and Feedback Forms:** After educational events or workshops, we distribute surveys to gauge participants' understanding of MAT and their attitudes toward it. This helps assess the effectiveness of the educational efforts and identify areas for improvement.
* **Engagement Metrics:** We track the number of people who attend forums, workshops, and other events, as well as the reach of social media campaigns and media ads. Use these metrics to evaluate and adjust the plan as needed.

**8. Sustainability and Long-Term Outreach**

**Objective:**

Ensure that the community education and engagement efforts are sustainable and continue to evolve to meet the needs of the community.

**Actions:**

* **Establish a Community Advisory Board:** Create a board that includes representatives from local organizations, healthcare providers, people in recovery, and local officials to continue driving education efforts.
* **Ongoing Education and Awareness:** Regularly update the community on MAT program advancements, success stories, and ongoing initiatives. Ensure that educational campaigns are integrated into the fabric of the community on a long-term basis.

**Summary**

This **Community Development and Education Plan** is designed to raise awareness about MAT/OTP and program and wellness services and our role in combating the opioid crisis. By engaging the community, reducing stigma, and providing clear pathways to treatment, Metro East aims to integrate into the community’s broader health system and help reduce the burden of opioid use disorder. The plan emphasizes inclusivity, partnerships, and sustainable outreach to ensure long-term success in supporting individuals seeking recovery.