

October 2020

What's New at Praxis

from Rachel Ehly, Praxis Project Director

As we continue to navigate COVID-19 together, many new and exciting changes are coming, while some things are staying the same.

What's new?

1. *Infectious Disease Training*: Praxis is excited to announce a new training on Infectious Diseases launching this month. This training covers transmission, testing, and treatment of common infections such as blood borne and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), tuberculosis (TB), and viral/bacterial infections. As always, our focus will be on prevention, testing, and integration strategies - including harm reduction, and risk assessments. We will continue to offer our HIV/AIDS and Viral Hepatitis Care Integration trainings individually. Learn more on our new [infectious disease webpage](#).
2. *Technical Assistance Menu*: We will be developing a new menu of options for our Technical Assistance (TA) services. We have heard your feedback that you often don't know what TA we can offer or how to request this service. We hope to provide a clear menu of options as well as concrete steps to request TA. Remember, this is a *free* service to BSAS funded treatment providers.
3. *Needs Assessment*: In the coming month, we will be sending out a survey to gather information about your training needs. This will help us refine our trainings and resources and provide additional training modalities.
4. *Upcoming Trainings*: We will be continuing our online regional trainings in October and

November. We are also offering a public online Opioid Overdose Prevention Training of Trainers in November. See our [online training page](#) for upcoming trainings, and our new [infectious disease webpage](#) with information on training details and resources.

5. *New Learning Technology*: Starting in October, Praxis will be hosting trainings through new technology. We will be switching from Adobe Connect to RingCentral. This new platform is powered by Zoom so we hope this will be more familiar to you and easier to use. Please keep an eye out for details regarding RingCentral as you book trainings in October and beyond.

What's staying the same?

1. *Online*: Given the ongoing uncertainty of COVID-19 and guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health & BSAS, Praxis will continue to offer our trainings exclusively online until further notice. Please don't wait until we are back on site to schedule your required trainings, as we do not know when that will be.
2. *Training Length*: Remember, each training is now 90-minutes long and offers 1.5 continuing education credits.

Meet Your Trainer: Cheryl Gagne, Sc.D.



(Cheryl Gagne [left] and her dog, Iggy Pop)

Cheryl Gagne, Sc.D. is our Senior Trainer at Praxis. She is also a Senior Associate at C4 Innovations, where she works on a variety of training and consultation projects around the

country. Her areas of interest and expertise are recovery supports, peer support, medication for addiction treatment, and co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders. She is a passionate advocate for social justice and racial equity. Prior to coming to C4, she worked at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation and taught courses in psychiatric rehabilitation at Boston University. Cheryl is a person in recovery from substance use disorders and mental illness. She has many family members who live with substance use disorder. These experiences have greatly informed her work with providers, service participants, and their family members. Cheryl likes reading, biking, and playing with her new puppy, Iggy Pop.

Infectious Diseases in the Commonwealth

This fall, Praxis is excited to introduce our [newest training on infectious diseases](#). Because of the prevalence of these infections in those who use substances, this training will provide foundational knowledge of common diseases as well as prevention strategies and treatment resources. Treatment providers working with individuals that are at high risk for infectious diseases are crucial to the delivery of education and harm reduction strategies to prevent widespread transmission.

People who engage in high-risk behaviors associated with substance use are at increased risk of contracting blood borne diseases (viral hepatitis, human immunodeficiency virus), sexually transmitted diseases (Gonorrhea, Syphilis, Chlamydia, etc.), and tuberculosis ([CDC, 2020](#)).

In Massachusetts, there continues to be a 2-3% growth rate in new HIV cases every year. Currently, there are 21,000 people living with HIV statewide, and though life expectancy rates are on the rise, half of all HIV related deaths in the state are persons who inject drugs ([MDPH, 2019](#)).

Massachusetts also sees 7,000-9,000 new cases of Hepatitis C every year ([MDPH, 2018](#)). Hepatitis C, which now kills more people in the U.S. than HIV, is the most common blood borne illness in the U.S. Though most cases are found in Baby Boomers, or those who were born between the years 1945-1965, the fastest growing demographic are those under the age of 30 who inject drugs because of the risk of contact with infected blood. Sharing needles and other injection equipment puts individuals at higher risk.

The Commonwealth has also seen sharp spikes in sexually transmitted diseases in recent years. Between the years 2014 and 2018, chlamydia increased 25%, gonorrhea increased 109%, and syphilis cases increased 94% ([MDPH, 2018](#)). Though it is hard to account for all factors contributing to this, medical professionals frequently point to continued development of effective treatments as a major factor. Since HIV is no longer the death sentence that it once was, and most STDs are treatable, people may not be as cautious about protecting themselves as they once were. But even with treatment available, there are still risks - pathogens can take a toll on the body, some people can experience severe complications such as infertility, and some bacterial STDs can mutate into drug resistant versions of themselves.

Tuberculosis (TB) is also an ongoing concern. Though Massachusetts saw a decline of 13% from 2014-2018, it continues to be a concern due to its high transmission rate ([MDPH, 2018](#)). TB bacteria are spread from person to person through microscopic droplets released into the air when a person coughs, laughs, speaks, or sneezes. Most new cases of tuberculosis are seen in communities of people experiencing homelessness and other congregate living situations. People who inject drugs are also at higher risk of contracting TB due to sharing drug equipment and vulnerability to experiencing homelessness or living in cramped conditions with poor ventilation.

People who are experiencing homelessness and those who inject drugs are among the most vulnerable to contagious infections. Praxis continues its commitment to protect the health of those who are marginalized by arming providers with the most up-to-date information and best practices. Join us as we debut our new [infectious disease training on Thursday, October 29](#). Together with you, we continue to work towards a Massachusetts which is safe and healthy for everyone.

Upcoming Trainings

Join us for following training opportunities:

- [Viral Hepatitis Care Integration: October 27](#)
- [Infectious Disease Prevention: October 29](#)
- [Opioid Overdose Prevention: November 2](#)
- [Harm Reduction: November 9](#)
- [HIV/AIDS Care Integration: November 12](#)
- [Viral Hepatitis Care Integration: November 17](#)
- [Infectious Disease Prevention: November 20](#)

Contact Us

Praxis provides training to all Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Addiction Services funded substance use disorder treatment programs on

- [Harm Reduction](#)
- [HIV/AIDS Care Integration](#)
- [Infectious Disease Prevention](#)
- [Opioid Overdose Prevention](#)
- [Viral Hepatitis Care Integration](#)

Contact us to request training or technical assistance at praxis@c4innovates.com.



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