April 20, 2020
Press Release

At press time, there is a total of 65 cases of COVID-19 in the Lincoln Trail District. An additional case was confirmed in Hardin County. The total number of cases per county is as follows: Hardin--29, LaRue--4, Marion--13, Meade--3, Nelson--13, and Washington—3. Currently, 58 cases are on home isolation or have been released from monitoring.

Although the COVID-19 epidemic has received much attention recently, America is still amid a serious substance abuse epidemic. According to the National Institutes of Health, COVID-19 could be especially dangerous to individuals who smoke tobacco, marijuana, or use vaping products. This is due to the damaging effect COVID-19 can have on the lungs. This can also apply to people who inject drugs (PWID). People who use opioids or methamphetamine may be vulnerable due to those drugs’ effects on respiratory and heart health. Additionally, the effects of these substances may make recovery from COVID-19 more difficult.

Chronic respiratory disease is known to increase overdose risk among people taking opioids. Already at risk for many diseases and underserved by the healthcare system, people with addiction disorders may have even more limited access to health care if hospitals are pushed to capacity by COVID-19. High rates of homelessness and incarceration in this population can create higher exposure to the virus due to close contact with others who are at high risk. Finally, many of the public health measures that have been implemented can create additional barriers for substance users. Access to syringe service programs, medications, and support systems may be disrupted, and ability to self-isolate can be difficult due to unstable housing in many cases. As a result, those in recovery face additional stress and may be at increased risk for relapse.

COVID-19 has altered the operation of many human service agencies. Programs are still available for PWID and those who are in active recovery. Many mental health services including individual, group, and peer support meetings are now offered online or virtually. Individuals seeking recovery services should contact their local providers for more information on availability. If you have access to the internet, visit findhelpnowky.org. Finally, communities that have existing Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) are still providing limited services.