

Opioid Epidemic Practical Toolkit

*Helping Faith and Community Leaders
Bring Hope and Healing to Our Communities*

community
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Hope and Healing

A practical toolkit for faith and community leaders in the face of the opioid epidemic

Drugs have inflicted a deep wound on our society and ensnared many people in their web.

– POPE FRANCIS, VATICAN CONFERENCE ON NARCOTICS, NOVEMBER 2016

In 2015 alone, more than 52,000 people died of a drug overdose in the United States, the majority of them (more than 33,000) from opioids.ⁱ Each day we are losing more than 91 Americans to opioid overdoses — and millions more are struggling with opioid addiction and suffering the consequences.ⁱⁱ

As a faith-based or community organization you are an instrumental partner in addressing and preventing public health issues. This toolkit from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships outlines ways in which you and your community can support prevention efforts and reduce risk, provide support to those in and seeking recovery to save lives and prevent future generations from harm.

Here are a few practical ways your community may consider bringing hope and healing to those in need:

Open Your Doors	Host or offer space to recovery programs and support groups.
Increase Awareness	Provide educational opportunities that create understanding and encourage compassion.
Build Community Capacity	Offer training programs to build the capacity of communities to respond.
Rebuild and Restore	Support individuals and families in rebuilding their lives.
Get Ahead of the Problem	Focus efforts on youth and prevention.
Connect and Collaborate	Join local substance use prevention coalitions to inform, connect, and strengthen your efforts.

We hope this toolkit is helpful to jump-start or advance your efforts to usher in a culture of compassion toward those struggling with addiction and its often severe consequences. We are grateful for your partnership.



Open your Doors

Host or offer space to recovery programs and support groups

Opiate addiction not only promotes isolation it makes it preferable. Heroin's isolation needs community response. – SAM QUINONES – AUTHOR OF DREAMLAND ⁱⁱⁱ

“When I meet a Jewish person who is in active addiction, I do not offer them to go synagogue and pray. The first place I’m going to send them is to the appropriate 12-step group.”

– RABBI TAUB ^{iv}

Finding a supportive community is essential to ongoing recovery. ^v The process of recovery is supported through relationships and social networks. Communities can offer to host

programs like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Celebrate Recovery, or other self-help support group. Programs like these help diminish the isolation suffered by those with addiction, connects them to others in recovery, ^{vi} and support those receiving medication-assisted treatment (MAT) as part of their recovery. ^{vii}



- Offer your space for weekly recovery programs and/or self-help support groups for people with addiction or for their families needing support.
- Boldly post your recovery program or self-help support group schedule. List them on *United Way's 211*, or *Drug Abuse.com*. Let people know your community is supportive and committed to recovery.
- Drive members of the community who lack access to transportation to treatment and recovery support services programs.
- Be a resource and connect people to the help they need. Create an easy to access resource center or a “wall” on your Facebook page with information that might include:
 - Local AA or NA Meetings
 - Local *Al-Anon Meetings* and *Alateen Meetings*
 - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)’s *Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator*.
 - SAMHSA’s National Helpline (800)-662- HELP (4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TTY). Free and confidential/help in English and Spanish 24/7.
- When offering public or congregational prayer, particularly prayers for the sick, please pray for people who suffer from addiction/opioid use disorder.

Increase Awareness

Provide educational opportunities that create understanding and encourage compassion

Addiction is a chronic disease characterized by drug seeking and use that is compulsive, or difficult to control, despite harmful consequences. The initial decision to take drugs is voluntary for most people, but repeated drug use can lead to brain changes that challenge an addicted person's self-control and interfere with their ability to resist intense urges to take drugs.^{viii}

– NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DRUG ABUSE

Community members need to understand addiction in order to create a culture of acceptance and support. Once addiction is understood as a chronic disease condition, not a personal failing, stigma and shame can be replaced by compassion and hope.

As a pastor in West Virginia noted, “Churches are not neutral bystanders: what they don’t say is just as important as what they do say.”^{ix}

Your community can partner with your local public health office, hospitals, community health centers, or nonprofit service organizations to host educational events on:



- **Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT):**
Encourage discussions and training around evidence based medication-assisted treatment for opioid addiction.
- **Addiction as a Disease and Long-Term Chronic Condition:** Helping community members understand the need for long term support of people in recovery.
- **Pain Management:** Being a knowledgeable consumer is important. Know to ask: Is that an opioid? Is it necessary? Are there alternatives such as non-medication pain relief or self-management programs for my pain?
- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)/ Trauma Informed Approaches:** Early stressful or traumatic events increase risk for substance abuse, can challenge recovery efforts, and underscore the importance of prevention like supporting youth and strengthening families.
- **Safe Drug Disposal:** 50.5 percent of those who abused prescription painkillers obtained them from friends or family.^x Learning about and promoting safe drug disposal sites can raise awareness and reduce the supply of opioids getting into the wrong hands.
- **Good Samaritan Laws:** Invite local law enforcement officials to talk about the laws in your state that may protect those providing and calling for help.

Build Community Capacity

Offer training programs to build the capacity of communities to respond

90 percent of Americans struggling with addiction are not currently getting treatment. Making sure they get it can make a huge difference. – HHS SECRETARY TOM PRICE, M.D.

Being able to refer people to the right treatment at the right time and help navigate systems of care will save lives.

Across the country lay leaders in faith and community organizations are being trained to make referrals to treatment, respond in an emergency, and provide on-going support groups for those in recovery and living with addiction.

Your community can partner with local public health offices, treatment facilities, hospitals, community health centers or nonprofit service providers to deliver capacity-building trainings which might include:

- **Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT):** A public health approach to the delivery of early intervention and treatment to people with substance use disorders and those at risk of developing these disorders.
- **How to Navigate the Substance Use Disorder System of Care:** Broaden your community's understanding of the types of substance use disorder treatment services available.
- **Motivational Interviewing:** A counseling approach that seeks to facilitate and strengthen an individual's motivation to change their drinking or other behavior by aligning the change in behavior with their life goals.
- **Emergency Response:** Recognizing overdoses symptoms and administering naloxone (an opioid overdose reversing drug that is pulling thousands of Americans from the brink of death.)
- **Peer Recovery Models:** By sharing their experiences, peers bring hope to people in recovery and promote a sense of belonging within the community.
- **Mental Health First Aid:** Courses that gives people the skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis.
- **Trauma-Informed Approaches and Trauma-Specific Interventions:** Critical awareness of the linkage between recovery and resilience for those individuals and families impacted by trauma.



Rebuild and Restore

Support individuals and families in rebuilding their lives

Drug addiction makes it hard to function in daily life. It affects how you act with your family, at work, and in the community. It is hard to change so many things at once and not fall back into old habits. Recovery from addiction is a lifelong effort.^{xi}

The lives of individuals and their families can be dramatically altered and too often destroyed by addiction. Faith and community organizations are poised to support what SAMHSA identifies as the *four major dimensions that support a life in recovery*:

Health	Overcoming or managing one's disease(s) or symptoms
Home	Having a stable and safe place to live
Purpose	Conducting meaningful daily activities (job, family caretaking, and resources to participate in society, etc.)
Community	Having relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope ^{xii}

Your community can restore these life-giving essentials by:

- Providing help with employment readiness, housing, transportation, food, clothing, or child care and support for recovering persons and their families as they overcome the consequences of addiction.
- Designating a community leader to connect people to essential services through a created database or United Way 2.1.1.
- Offering life readiness and coaching programs for reentering formerly incarcerated citizens.
- Coaching families on financial management.



Get Ahead of the Problem

Focus Efforts on Youth and Prevention

Close to 45% of high school seniors use marijuana daily, and 28 percent of youth have tried cigarettes by 12th grade. In addition, alcohol remains the most widely used drug by today's teenagers.^{xiii} But did you know that prescription medications are some of the most commonly misused drugs by teens, after tobacco, alcohol and marijuana?^{xiv}

Communities may also consider targeting some of their efforts on youth not only because the path of experimental substance use may lead to life changing and potentially devastating consequences but also because young people may be suffering in homes where addiction is present.^{xv}

Exposure to early adversity, including child abuse and neglect, mental illness and substance abuse in the household, can contribute to poorer health outcomes and fewer life opportunities. ACEs have been associated with risky health behaviors, chronic health conditions, mental health problems, and life opportunities that include high school non-completion, unemployment, and poverty. In addition, those with a history of child abuse and neglect are 1.5 times more likely to use illicit drugs in middle adulthood.^{xvi}



Consider offering programs and services that support families and empower youth that:

- Focus on prevention and offer positive parenting programs and programs that support strong relationships and families.
- Offer mentoring programs to support children of parents in active addiction.
- Gather resources, donate clothing items and necessities like cribs and car seats, and provide support for local foster families as they meet the needs of foster children.^{xvii}
- Host a faith-based recovery or support program such as *The Landing*, or *Teen Challenge USA*, or similar programs for young people.
- Create a place on your website or Facebook page with resources provided in the last pages of this toolkit such as
 - *NIDA's Teen Talk*,
 - *What to Do If Your Teen or Young Adult Has a Problem with Drugs, Get Smart About Drugs*, or
 - *Above the Influence*
- Help ensure that all children and youth have access to safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments so that all people can reach their full life potential.
- Coaching families on financial management.

Connect and Collaborate

Join local substance use prevention coalitions to inform, connect, and strengthen your efforts

No single organization or person can address the multitude of services needed to help people affected by mental health or substance use conditions... the best sources are the people who live, serve, and work in the community and the best results are often seen when they undertake such action together. ^{xviii} – SAMHSA ONE VOICE, ONE COMMUNITY

Across the country treatment professionals, law enforcement, faith communities, service providers, the courts, schools, city and health recreation centers, media, business, policymakers, families and youth leaders are coordinating their efforts to serve those struggling with addiction.

To join a coalition visit *Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)*, join or start a *Recovery Community Organization*, or contact your regional public health department, *HHS Regional Offices*, or *SAMHSA Regional Offices* and connect with diverse partners in collaborative, cross-cultural, and comprehensive substance abuse prevention efforts that make sense for your community.

- Lend your organization’s health “assets” to the effort. Whether you have space for a support group to meet, can hold educational forums, coordinate volunteers to help transport people to treatment and recovery support services or help with job interviews, your community’s contribution is an essential piece to the whole effort.
- Review SAMHSA’s toolkit, *One Voice, One Community: Building Strong and Effective Partnerships Among Community and Faith Organizations*
- Consider recognizing national observances related to substance abuse treatment and prevention.
 - *National Recovery Month*, September. Invite people in recovery to help with planning.
 - *National Prevention Week*, May. Annual health observance dedicated to increasing public awareness of, and action around, mental and/or substance use disorders.



Federal Resources

General resources from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA) and others.

SAMHSA's Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit

Visit *Facts for Community Members/ Safety Advice for Patient and Family Members* sections of the SAMHSA toolkit and download them to share with your community.

SAMHSA's Decisions in Recovery: Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder

Handbook for anyone looking for timely help or information about cutting down or cutting out narcotics, prescription pain medications, heroin, or other opioid drugs.

NIDA's Step by Step Guides

These guides walk families through decision points and offers a rich list of resources.

CDC's Opioid Basics

Important information in language that non-professionals can understand about the opioid epidemic and commonly used terms.

NIDA's Q&A on Naloxone

Information for community leaders on these potentially lifesaving drugs and how they are being administered.

NIDA's Signs of Substance Abuse and Addiction

Includes *Easy to Read Drug Facts* that can be downloaded and shared.

Pathways to Safer Opioid Use Health.gov

Learn a lot about how to engage the medical system more proactively by using this interactive tool designed for health professionals.

CDC's Guideline Resources: Patient & Partner Tools

Tools to help patients and doctors treatment options with all of the risks and benefits carefully considered.

CDC's Safer, More Effective Pain Management

A resource to inform providers' ability to offer safer, more effective pain management and supports clinical decision making about prescribing opioids.

Substance Abuse Treatment Helpline at 1-800-662-HELP

Confidential, free service, along with referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations, are available for individuals and family members facing substance abuse and mental health issues.

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

SAMHSA resource to find a local substance abuse treatment facility.



Focus on Youth and Family

NIDA Teen Talk

Learn about teen drug use and the brain. This site features videos, games, blog posts and more!

Easy-to-Read Drug Facts

Videos like “Anyone Can Become Addicted to Drugs” and “Why are Drugs so Hard to Quit” provide critical information in an easy-to-understand format.

What to Do If Your Teen or Young Adult Has a Problem with Drugs

NIDA answers timely questions about teens and substance abuse to share with families in your community.

NIDA’s Family Checkup; Positive Parenting Prevents Drug Abuse

Five questions highlight parenting skills that are important in preventing the initiation and progression of drug use among youth.

OAH Health Library of Federal Adolescent Health Resources on Substance Abuse

A comprehensive range of federal resources on adolescent substance abuse (including the abuse of prescription drugs).

Partnership at DrugFree.org

Resources for parents or other caregivers looking for information and strategies to prevent, or stop, illicit drug use by adolescents.

Get Smart About Drugs

An online resource from the DEA for parents.

Growing up Drug Free – A Parent’s Guide to Prevention

A joint effort between the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education that provides information and research specifically for parents on why kids use drugs and how parents can be involved in helping them stay drug free.

Above the Influence

The adolescent-geared website from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).

Talk. They Will Hear You

Prepare for one of the most important conversations you may ever have with your kids about underage drinking with SAMHSA’s app “Talk. They Hear You.”

National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day

SAMHSA raises awareness about the importance of emphasizing positive mental health as part of a child’s overall development from birth.



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The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships (“The Partnership Center”) is the Department’s liaison to the faith community and to grassroots organizations.

The Department recognizes that without the engagement of secular and faith-based nonprofits, community organizations, neighborhoods and to wider communities in general, services will not reach people who need them most.

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