

Opioid Use Impacts Families of Our Vermont School Children and Our Greater School Community

Definition

Opioids are a class of drugs that are chemically similar to alkaloids found in opium poppies. Historically they have been used as painkillers, but they also have great potential for misuse. Repeated use of opioids greatly increases the risk of developing an opioid use disorder. The use of illegal opiate drugs such as heroin, and the misuse of legally available pain relievers such as oxycodone and hydrocodone, can have serious negative health effects.

Source: Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration

Vermont's Expanding Opioid Crisis

Here in Vermont, since 2012, death resulting from opioids from both prescription opioids and heroin have dramatically increased. This expanding crisis requires a multi-agency response. Currently misuse of prescription pain relievers is decreasing, especially among Vermonters 18 to 25 years old. However there has been a sharp increase in heroin-related visits to Emergency Departments. Fatalities involving heroin are increasing.

Source: Vermont Department of Health [Opioid Misuse, Abuse & Dependence Data Brief, April 2017](#)

Our Role in Preventing Opioid Abuse

Efforts to effectively address opioid abuse must be multifaceted, requiring prevention, screening, brief intervention and referral for treatment, treatment, and recovery systems. Vermont's Agency of Education concurs with the Vermont Department of Health in supporting the concept that there is no single approach to ending our opioid crisis. We support the statement that everyone has a part to play in preventing opioid abuse and addiction. When we deliver a health curriculum, conduct screenings, run a school or teen program proven to promote mental health and reduce substance abuse, when we mentor, provide family education support groups or work to change conditions in the community – [we do our part to prevent opioid addiction](#).

Source: Vermont Department of Health Preventing Opioid Abuse, June 2014

Our Response: Vermont Agency of Education Collaboration with Vermont Department of Health

The Vermont Agency of Education requires comprehensive skills-based health education be taught in all schools, aligned with National Health Education Standards and providing instruction in 11 health content areas including substance use. Curriculum, instruction and assessment must also align with Education Quality Standards stipulations. The two agencies embrace the [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model](#) in our collaborative efforts, making the student the focal point of our work.

We encourage school communities to fully utilize the expertise of their school nursing professionals. School nurses serve as a conduit to provide the most current guidance and available resources – including ability to access the overdose reversal medication known as naloxone hydrochloride (brand name Narcan®) at their respective local education agency (LEA). The school nursing function is supported by the Vermont Department of Health's [Maternal & Child Health Division](#) with additional programs and services provided to schools by the [Alcohol & Drug Abuse Program Division](#).

RESOURCES

Data and Information:

- Hazelton Betty Ford Foundation (2015). [*Survey Finds Risky Opioid Use Among College-Age Youth, With Limited Knowledge of the Danger or Where to Get Help*](#)
- Journal of School Health. [*Special Issue: The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model. Guest Editor: Holly Hunt, MA. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Population Health, Healthy Schools Program.*](#) November, 2015. Volume 85, Issue 11, p.729–823.
- Vermont Department of Health. Division of Health Surveillance. [*2015 Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey*](#)

Pertinent Vermont Legislation and Rules:

- [Title 16, Chapter 1, Subchapter 7, Section 131: Comprehensive Health Education](#)
- [Title 16, Chapter 1, Subchapter 7, Section 136: Wellness Program](#)
- [Title 16, Chapter 23, Subchapter 1, Section 906: Course of Study](#)
- [Vermont Education Quality Standards](#)

Support Agencies:

- [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: Adolescent and School Health](#)
- [Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [Vermont Department of Health](#)

Contact Information

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