

OPIATE OVERDOSE  
PREVENTION  
TOOLKIT  
KNOW THE FACTS



# OPIATE OVERDOSE PREVENTION TOOLKIT

United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse has developed this Toolkit as part of "Prevention in a Box" to bring relevant information about opioid overdose to individuals, families, practitioners, and other key community stakeholders. The Commission on Substance Abuse is dedicated to empowering our diverse community to live healthy and drug-free. Recognizing the consequences of substance abuse and mental health conditions among Broward County youth and adults, the Commission seeks to distribute accurate information and resources that promote health and wellness.

The Commission strives to build individual, family, and community competence and capacity for lasting positive social change. **Today, the majority of youth and adults in Broward County do not misuse substances.** The Commission, therefore, encourages all individuals to read, review, and utilize this toolkit in its entirety.

Sincerely,



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United Way of Broward County



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## Mission

United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse's mission is to  
**empower our diverse community to live healthy and drug-free.**



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# OPIATES

Opiates are a group of drugs that produce feelings of pain relief and/or euphoria.

Some opioids are prescription medications such as:

- Codeine
- Oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet, Percodan)
- Hydrocodone (Vicodin, Lortab, Norco)
- Morphine
- Hydromorphone (Dilaudid, Exalgo)
- Fentanyl (Duragesic, Fentora)
- Acetyl-Fentanyl, UH-47700
- Buprenorphine (Subutex, Suboxone)

Other opiates are illegal drugs, such as heroin and opium, which is an addictive drug processed from morphine. Opiates can minimize the brain and body's perception of pain as well as regulate mood, breathing, and blood pressure.

Opiate use can lead to overmedication, abuse, addiction, and/or overdose.

## OPIATE OVERDOSE

Opiate overdose is a major public health problem contributing to accidental deaths among those who use, misuse and/or abuse prescription and illicit opiates.

Opiate tolerance develops from regular opiate use causing the body to become accustomed to the drug and needing larger or more frequent dosage to experience the same effect. Furthermore, withdrawal symptoms may occur if use is reduced or stopped.

**Negative Opiate Effects** include:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Severe allergic reactions
- Diminished breathing
- Diminished heartbeat



**Signs of Opiate Overmedication** include:

- Unusual sleepiness (nodding out)
- Mental confusion
- Slurred speech
- Intoxicated behavior
- Slow or shallow breathing
- Slow heartbeat
- Low blood pressure
- Difficulty waking from sleep
- Pinpoint pupils

**Signs of Opiate Overdose** include:

- Pale and/or clammy face
- Limp Body
- Blue or purple case fingernails and/or lips
- Vomiting and gurgling
- Inability to awake
- Unable to speak
- Slow or stopped breathing
- Slow or stopped heartbeat

**Opiate Overdose** can occur when:

- A person deliberately misuses an opiate
- A person mistakenly misuses an opiate
- A person takes an opiate with alcohol, over-the-counter products, illicit drugs, and/or other prescription medications such as benzodiazetines
- A person takes an opiate after stopping long-term use and losing tolerance which can trigger adverse effects

Opiate Overdose can lead to death if not treated.

**Effective treatment is available for opiate addiction.**

**Recovery is possible!**

# LAWS AND LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

In Florida, there is mandatory sentencing and fines for anyone who knowingly illegally sells, purchases, manufactures, delivers, and/or possesses opiates.

- Minimum sentence based on drug amount is 3 years and a \$50,000 fine
- Maximum sentence based on drug amount is life imprisonment without parole

In Florida, possession of heroin in any amount is a Third Degree Felony and trafficking of heroin is a Second Degree Felony.

In Florida, Oxycodone (OxyContin) and Hydrocodone (Vicodin, Lortab, Norco) are considered Schedule II drugs with high potential for abuse and restriction in medical treatment. Their possession and trafficking results in mandatory sentencing and fines.

In Florida, *Good Samaritan Statutes* offers immunity to persons from charges, prosecution, or penalization as following:

- Any person acting in good faith who is seeking medical assistance for a person experiencing drug-related overdose
- Any person experiencing drug-related overdose in need of and/or seeking medical assistance

## STORY OF HOPE AND RECOVERY

### Steve's Story

I had endured a sports injury for which I was prescribed the pain medication OxyContin. Initially, OxyContin relieved my pain. It also dulled any other troubles that attacked my body and mind. I liked the feeling and lack of emotion that I achieved when taking OxyContin - so much so - that I continued to complain of pain to get more pills. In fact, I started visiting multiple doctors, clinics, and pharmacies to get multiple prescriptions. I even complained of pain during a routine dental visit to convince my dentist to give me a prescription. Basically, the more I took - the more I wanted and needed. It was out of control and so was I until the day of my overdose. If my girlfriend had not found me, I may not be able to share this story. I just made it to the emergency room to save my life. My family had me involuntarily placed in a treatment center. At first, I did not relate my OxyContin use to illicit drug abusers, but the longer I was in treatment the more I realized the similarities. Today, I recognize my recovery is day-by-day work and day-by-day success. I have been clean for 9 years.

# EDUCATING INDIVIDUALS

## Opiate Risk Factors

Knowing the risk factors associated with opiate use is essential.

These risk factors include:

- Anyone who uses prescription and non-prescription opiates, particularly long-term, is at risk for opiate overdose and addiction
- Persons who have a history of substance abuse or dependence who use opiates are at higher risk of overdose
- Persons who take opiates that are prescribed for someone else are also at high risk of addiction and/or overdose
- Consuming a large dose of opiates can cause a fatal overdose

## Opiate Symptoms

Symptoms associated with opiate abuse and/or disorder include:

- Intense elation
- Irritability
- Lowered motivation
- Unusual drowsiness
- Slow reaction times and thought processing

## Protective Measures

Employing protective factors with opiates is vital.

These protective factors include:

- Take prescription opiates under the guidance of a licensed physician and as prescribed
- Talk with health care professionals who prescribe opiates
- Disengage in non-medical and illicit opiate use
- Do not mix prescribed medication with alcohol or other drugs
- Seek treatment for opiate addiction
- Get help from a healthcare professional if experiencing and witnessing opiate abuse
- Get immediate medical attention for a person experiencing opiate overdose - **CALL 9-1-1**

# INFORMING FAMILIES

The positive influence of family and the home environment promotes an individual's well being. Families play an extremely critical role in preventing opiate abuse and overdose.

Families are often first to observe the signs of opiate abuse.

Opiate abuse symptoms and overdose may be witnessed by family members.

It is important for families to understand the implications of opiate use and misuse.

## FAMILY GUIDANCE

Guidelines to help families include:

- Educate yourself and your family members about opiates
- Set clear expectations about using illicit drugs and prescribed medication without a prescription
- Maintain open and regular communication
- Keep medication in a locked cabinet
- Take routine inventory of medication
- Properly dispose of old and unused medication
- Be observant of family members' physical condition and psychological responses
- Get treatment support for someone suspected of opiate abuse
- Get immediate medical attention for someone suspected of opiate overdose – **CALL 9-1-1**
- Purchase Naloxone through your primary care physician at your local pharmacy







## TOOLS FOR EDUCATORS

Youth and young adults spend a considerable amount of time in school.

Educators and school administrators can play a pivotal role in decreasing and preventing opiate abuse and overdose.

### TIPS FOR EDUCATORS

Educational institutions can employ the following strategies related to opiate use:

- Institute policies about substance possession and use
- Provide training to faculty and staff on opiates
- Consider opiate use and abuse when students display symptomatology
- Provide education to students regarding health consequences of using opiates
- Implement evidence-based substance abuse education and prevention programming
- Utilize substance abuse screening and early detection approaches
- Establish standard protocols for detected substance abuse among students
- Promote suspension alternatives
- Partner with treatment and medical practitioners
- Get treatment support for someone suspected of opiate abuse
- Get immediate medical attention for someone suspected of opiate overdose - **CALL 9-1-1**

# TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers may notice an emotional mood or behavior in an employee that may be a sign of opiate misuse and/or abuse.

Opiate use and abuse may negatively impact an individual's workplace attendance and performance.

Opiate use and abuse in the work environment can present a safety risk and liability.

**Opiate Overmedication** by an employee can be associated with:

- Mental confusion
- Concentration difficulties
- Mood swings
- Anxiety and agitation
- Intoxicated behavior
- Inability to perform and/or complete tasks
- Frequently missing work

## TOOLS FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers can utilize the following strategies related to opiate use:

- Institute a drug-free workplace
- Implement drug-free policies and activities
- Provide workplace substance use prevention education
- Offer specialized supervisory training
- Ensure access to employee assistance counseling and treatment
- Select a health insurance plan with addiction treatment coverage

# INFORMING PRACTITIONERS

A number of health and human service practitioners play a vital role in the prevention and treatment of opiate abuse and overdose.

These practitioners include:

- Doctors
- Nurses
- Pharmacists
- Health Educators
- Clinicians
- Social Workers
- Certified Addiction Professionals



Medical practitioners can influence individuals' prescription medication practices as well as their substance use attitudes and behaviors.

## TIPS & TOOLS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The medical and human service communities can employ the following strategies to address opiate abuse and overdose:

- Screen individuals for substance abuse prior to prescribing medication
- Follow guidelines for responsible medication prescribing (i.e. Centers for Disease Control Guidelines)
- Select appropriate medications based on symptom severity, patient reliability in taking medication, and dependency potential of medication
- Prescribe controlled substances only when other treatments have proven ineffective
- Determine opiate therapy duration
- Educate patients on prescribed medications
- Obtain patient informed consent for proposed medication therapy
- Use provider-patient agreements with prescribing controlled substances
- Assess patients' use of the controlled substance and other drugs
- Monitor patients' response to treatment
- Discuss safe use, storage, and disposal of prescription medication
- Utilize prescription drug monitoring programs
- Engage in continuing education regarding opiates and medication prescribing
- Prescribe Naloxone with opiate prescription

# ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

Preventing opiate abuse and overdose requires a community-wide response and sense of responsibility.

Equally important is decreasing any stigma associated with individuals requiring pain management care as well as persons needing opiate use treatment.

Education, advocacy, and community action are essential for health promotion associated with opiate use.

## SOCIAL ACTION

The following strategies can be employed to address opiate use and overdose by advocating for:

- General community education, information dissemination, and prevention regarding opiates
- Healthcare practitioner education regarding opiates
- Fully-funded and up-to-date Prescription Drug Monitoring Program
- Guidelines and enforcement for Prescription Drug Monitoring Program utilization
- Insurance coverage and treatment access for individuals with opiate use disorders
- De-stigmatization of individuals requiring opiate therapy
- De-stigmatization of individuals requiring opiate abuse treatment
- Information dissemination regarding Good Samaritan protections for seeking or requiring opiate abuse treatment
- Legislation that promotes substance use prevention and expands treatment access
- Write legislators supporting these bills
- Write legislators about your family's experience with opiate use and addiction

# HEALTH PROMOTION PLAN

By completing this page, individuals can examine health status and health promotion behaviors.

## General Health Rating

Excellent       Good       Fair       Poor

## Do you

Use illicit opiates like heroin?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Use prescribed opiates?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Take more opiates than would like and/or than prescribed?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Experience negative consequences from using opiates?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Obsessive about getting and/or using opiates?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Unsuccessful attempts to reduce or stop opiate use?	_____ YES	_____ NO

## YES answers to any of these questions may indicate potential risk.

Health Risks (Factors that Negatively Impact Health): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Health Promotion (Factors that Positively Impact Health): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Health Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Strategies to Accomplish Health Goals: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Success Influencers (Factors that Positively Impact Goal Attainment): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Where to go for help: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Important Factors: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# RESOURCES

**United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse**

[www.drugfreebroward.org](http://www.drugfreebroward.org)

**Narcotics Anonymous**

[www.sfrna.net](http://www.sfrna.net) and 1-866-288-NANA

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

**National Treatment Referral Helpline**

1-800-662-HELP (4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD for hearing impaired)

**Smart Recovery®**

[www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)

**The Partnership at Drug-Free.org (Partnership for Drug-Free Kids)**

[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)

**2-1-1 Broward 24 Hour Information and Referral Helpline**

[www.211-broward.org](http://www.211-broward.org)

Dial 2-1-1 or 954-537-0211

# SOURCES

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

**National Institute of Drug Abuse**

**Florida Statute**



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1300 South Andrews Avenue  
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316  
954-462-4850  
[www.drugfreebroward.org](http://www.drugfreebroward.org)