



The Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

# The Opioid Epidemic Practical Toolkit:

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



# THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

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



**“Americans of faith have taken a leading role in the compassionate approach we need to take on this [opioid] crisis, and we’re eager to support their work, however we can.”<sup>i</sup>**

— Secretary Alex M. Azar, II, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

On average, **115 Americans** die every day from an opioid overdose. In 2016, over 11 million Americans misused prescription opioids, nearly one million used heroin, and 2.1 million had an opioid-use disorder due to prescription opioids or heroin.<sup>ii</sup>

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recognizes that faith-based and community partners eagerly and willingly step in to meet the needs of their colleagues, friends and neighbors, especially during times of emergency and distress.

**That’s why HHS Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships** (also known as “The Partnership Center”)

**created this Practical Toolkit for faith-based and community leaders. We want our partners to be able to respond to the current opioid health crisis — complementing their compassion and local understanding with the expertise of HHS.**

We hope this toolkit is helpful in jump-starting or advancing your efforts to usher in a culture of compassion toward those who are struggling with addiction, and its often severe consequences.

Thank you for engaging in this issue. We are grateful for your partnership!



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This toolkit, which is segmented into seven key areas, briefly covers practical ways your community can consider bringing hope and healing to those in need. To further complement this kit, we recommend signing up for our monthly webinars, which go into greater detail and highlight promising practices. To be added to the webinar list, email us at [Partnerships@HHS.Gov](mailto:Partnerships@HHS.Gov).

	<b>Open Your Doors</b>	Host or connect people to recovery programs and support groups
	<b>Increase Awareness</b>	Provide educational opportunities that create understanding and encourage compassion
	<b>Build Community Capacity</b>	Offer training programs to build the capacity of communities to respond
	<b>Rebuild and Restore</b>	Support individuals and families in rebuilding their lives
	<b>Get Ahead of the Problem</b>	Focus efforts on youth and prevention
	<b>Connect and Collaborate</b>	Join local substance-use prevention coalitions, so as to inform, connect and strengthen your efforts
	<b>Federal Resources</b>	Inform and educate your community



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## Open Your Doors

Finding a supportive community and building strong relationships are essential elements to ongoing recovery.

To foster recovery, communities can offer to host programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Celebrate Recovery or other support groups. These programs assist those with substance use disorders to feel less alone by connecting them to others who are also in recovery. These programs can also support those receiving medication-assisted treatment (MAT) as part of their recovery.<sup>iii</sup>

### Getting Started

Here are just a few ways to open your doors to the community:

- **Offer your space** for weekly recovery programs and/or self-help support groups for people with substance-use disorders, as well as their families who may also need support.
- **Connect people** to existing support in your community.
- **Offer free transportation** to treatment services and/or recovery support programs.
- **Advertise local meetings** in your newsletters, community calendars, websites, and social media channels. Consider including:
  - Local [AA.org](http://AA.org), [NA.org](http://NA.org) and/or [CelebrateRecovery.com](http://CelebrateRecovery.com) mutual aid support groups.
  - SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator. [bit.ly/PCPT-30](http://bit.ly/PCPT-30)
  - SAMHSA's National Helpline (Free, confidential help in English/Spanish, 24/7): (800) 662- HELP (4357). [bit.ly/PCPT-29](http://bit.ly/PCPT-29)



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## Open Your Doors

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- List your community's programs on United Way 2.1.1., your Facebook® page, or community's event schedule. [211.org](http://211.org)
- **When offering public or congregational prayer** — particularly prayers for the sick— please pray for people who are suffering opioid or substance use disorder.



**“When I meet a Jewish person who is in active addiction, I do not suggest they go to a synagogue and pray. The first place I'm going to send them is to the appropriate 12-step group.”<sup>iv</sup>**

— Rabbi Taub



## Increase Awareness

A West Virginia pastor wisely said,

**“Churches are not neutral bystanders: What they don't say is just as important as what they do say.”<sup>v</sup>**

As stated earlier, finding a supportive community is essential to recovery. However, old conventions, as well as misunderstandings about addiction and the recovery process, often stand in the way of our communities providing the critical support and connections people need.

Our hope is that as addiction is understood as a treatable, chronic, medical condition — and not a personal or moral failing — prejudice and shame will be replaced by a spirit of compassion and hope that opens doors, hearts, and resources to those suffering with a substance-use disorder.



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## Increase Awareness

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### Getting Started

To help increase awareness, you can partner with local community health experts, law enforcement agencies and others to help educate your community on:

- **Addiction as a Treatable Disease and Long-Term Chronic Condition:** Help community members understand the need for long-term support of people in recovery. [bit.ly/PCPT-1](http://bit.ly/PCPT-1)
- **Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT):** Educate your community on MAT and how to offer the best support people need when they are in treatment. [bit.ly/PCPT-2](http://bit.ly/PCPT-2)
- **Pain Management:** Increase patient awareness of pain treatment and management. Learn to ask the doctor: [bit.ly/PCPT-3](http://bit.ly/PCPT-3)
  - “Is this an opioid?”
  - “Is an opioid necessary?”
  - “Are there alternatives to using opioids for pain relief?”
- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)/ Trauma Informed Approaches:** Help others learn how childhood adversities can actually increase a person’s risk for substance misuse and challenge their recovery efforts. [bit.ly/PCPT-4](http://bit.ly/PCPT-4)
- **Safe Drug Disposal:** More than half of those who abused prescription painkillers actually obtained them from friends or family. To address this trend, participate and promote “Take Back Drug Days” in your community and help reduce the supply of prescription opioids getting into the wrong hands. [bit.ly/PCPT-5](http://bit.ly/PCPT-5)
- **Good Samaritan Laws:** Invite local law enforcement officials to talk to your group about the laws in your state that may protect those who are providing and/or calling for help when someone has overdosed. [bit.ly/PCPT-6](http://bit.ly/PCPT-6)



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## Building Community Capacity

By referring people to proper treatment and helping them navigate systems of continued care, we can save lives. In fact, leaders in faith and community organizations can be trained to:

- Become a peer-recovery coach
- Make referrals to treatment
- Respond to an emergency situation, and
- Provide ongoing support for those in recovery and living with an addiction.

“They are getting into situations every single day without knowing exactly how to react.”<sup>vi</sup>

— Bob Hanson,  
Marshall Health



## Getting Started

Your community can partner local expertise (including public health offices, treatment facilities, hospitals, community health centers or nonprofit service providers) to help deliver capacity-building trainings, such as:

- **Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT):** A public health approach to encourage early intervention and refer people to the appropriate treatment and support. [SAMHSA.gov/SBIRT](https://www.samhsa.gov/sbirt)
- **Emergency Response:** Learn how to recognize overdose symptoms and administer naloxone (opioid overdose-reversing drug).
- **Peer-Recovery Models:** Sharing experiences brings hope to people in recovery and promotes a sense of belonging within the community. [bit.ly/PCPT-7](https://bit.ly/PCPT-7)
- **Mental Health First Aid:** Gain the skills to help someone experiencing a mental health crisis. [bit.ly/PCPT-8](https://bit.ly/PCPT-8)
- **Trauma-Informed Approaches and Trauma-Specific Interventions:** Learn about the critical connections between recovery and resilience for people impacted by trauma. [bit.ly/PCPT-9](https://bit.ly/PCPT-9)
- **Motivational Interviewing:** Learn a counseling approach that seeks to facilitate and strengthen an individual’s motivation to change misuse of substances and other risky behaviors. [bit.ly/PCPT-10](https://bit.ly/PCPT-10)



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## Rebuild and Restore

Addiction can leave the lives of individuals and their families dramatically altered by the loss of jobs, homes, or damaged relationships. For decades, faith and community organizations have been providing the kinds of “wrap-around services” that can help to restore and rebuild lives and livelihoods. The opportunity here is to connect those programs to what SAMHSA has identified as the four dimensions that support a life in recovery [bit.ly/PCPT-7](https://bit.ly/PCPT-7):

<b>HEALTH</b>	Overcoming or managing one’s disease or symptoms
<b>HOME</b>	Having a stable and safe place to live
<b>PURPOSE</b>	Conducting meaningful daily activities (e.g., job, family care-taking and resources to participate in society, etc.)
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	Having relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love and hope. <sup>viii</sup>



“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.”<sup>vii</sup>

—NIDA’s “What Is Relapse?”

## Getting Started

- Provide help with employment readiness, housing, transportation, food, clothing, or assist with child care.
- Designate a community leader to connect people to essential services by creating a database or using United Way’s 2-1-1.
- Offer life readiness and coaching programs for formerly incarcerated citizens reentering society.
- Coach people how to manage their finances.
- Support local foster care families by gathering resources, donating clothing items and/or other much-needed necessities, including cribs and car seats.<sup>ix</sup>





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## Get Ahead of the Problem

A leader from the Boys & Girls Club of America said recently, “Children may make up 25 percent of our population, but they are 100 percent of our future.”

Children exposed to abuse, neglect, mental illness, substance-use disorders in the household — or any other Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) — may experience poorer health outcomes, learning problems, and are at higher risk for substance use disorders.<sup>x</sup>

In order to nurture the healthy development of future generations, we need to reduce known risk factors, elevate protective factors — such as early intervention and the support of stable and caring relationships — and implement evidence-based programs that support families and empower youth.

## Getting Started

- Educate your community leaders and family members about ACEs and their impact on

future behavior and learning. Offer programs on positive parenting and mentor youth and young adults. [bit.ly/PCPT-11](https://bit.ly/PCPT-11)

- Implement the six key principles of trauma-informed approaches throughout your organization. [bit.ly/PCPT-12](https://bit.ly/PCPT-12), [bit.ly/PCPT-13](https://bit.ly/PCPT-13)
- Include the subject of substance-use disorder in your programs.
- Host faith-based recovery support programs, such as The Landing or Teen Challenge USA. [Bit.ly/CR-TheLanding](https://bit.ly/CR-TheLanding) and [TeenChallengeUSA.com](https://TeenChallengeUSA.com).



**“We know that what protects children from adverse experiences is nurturing parenting skills, stable family relationships, and caring adults outside the family who can serve as role models or mentors.”<sup>xi</sup>**

—U.S. Surgeon Gen., VADM Jerome Adams



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## Get Ahead of the Problem

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- Create a place on your website, in your newsletters or on your social media pages that links to helpful resources, such as:
  - NIDA’s “Teen Talk” website. [Teens.DrugAbuse.gov](https://www.drugabuse.gov/teens)
  - Partnership for Drug-Free Kids’ “Above the Influence” website. [AboveTheInfluence.com](https://www.abovetheinfluence.com)
  - Sign up to receive the latest Drugs & Health NIDA Blogs for Teens and share the latest blogs and videos with your community. [bit.ly/PCPT-14](https://bit.ly/PCPT-14)
- Help ensure all children and youth have access to safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments, so people can reach their life potential.



## Connect and Collaborate

With lives being lost daily, the opioid crisis is an “all-hands on deck” epidemic. Across the U.S., treatment professionals, law enforcement, faith communities, service providers, drug courts, schools, recreation centers, media, businesses, policy-makers, families and youth leaders are stepping forward to help contribute their time, talents, and resources to help coordinate and serve those struggling with addiction.

### Find Coalition Partners

After assessing your community’s needs, explore available coalition partners in your community:

- Visit the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. [CADCA.org](https://www.cadca.org)
- Contact your regional public health department, HHS Regional Offices or SAMHSA Regional Offices. [bit.ly/PCPT-15](https://bit.ly/PCPT-15) and [bit.ly/PCPT-16](https://bit.ly/PCPT-16)



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## Connect and Collaborate

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- Connect with diverse partners to establish collaborative, cross-cultural, and comprehensive substance-abuse prevention efforts.

### Getting Started

- **Lend Your Organization’s Health “Assets”:** Whether you have space for a support group to meet, can hold or host 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 element to the recovery journey of any individual or their family.
- **Review SAMHSA’s toolkit, “One Voice, One Community: Building Strong and Effective Partnerships Among Community and Faith Organizations.”** [bit.ly/PCPT-17](http://bit.ly/PCPT-17)



“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.”<sup>xii</sup>

— SAMHSA’s “One Voice, One Community “

- Recognize National Observances:
  - **National Prevention Week**  
May 13-19, 2018  
[SAMHSA.Gov/Prevention-Week](http://SAMHSA.Gov/Prevention-Week)
  - **National Recovery Month**  
September 2018 [RecoveryMonth.gov](http://RecoveryMonth.gov)



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## Federal Resources — General

The following are opioid-related 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 other HHS divisions.

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
<b>Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit (SAMHSA)</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/PCPT-18">bit.ly/PCPT-18</a>	Visit the <b>“Facts for Community Members”</b> and <b>“Safety Advice for Patient and Family Members”</b> sections of this kit. Download them to share with your community. <a href="http://bit.ly/PCPT-19">bit.ly/PCPT-19</a> and <a href="http://bit.ly/PCPT-20">bit.ly/PCPT-20</a>
<b>“Decisions in Recovery: Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder”</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/PCPT-21">bit.ly/PCPT-21</a>	SAMHSA’s handbook for anyone seeking timely help or information about cutting down or cutting out narcotics, prescription pain medications, heroin and/or other opioid drugs.
<b>“Step-by-Step” Guides</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/PCPT-22">bit.ly/PCPT-22</a>	These NIDA guides walk families through decision points and offer rich lists of resources.
<b>Opioid Basics (CDC)</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/PCPT-23">bit.ly/PCPT-23</a>	Important information regarding the opioid epidemic that’s designed for non-health professionals and ideal for community and faith-based organizations. Includes helpful commonly-used terms.
<b>Q&amp;A on Naloxone</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/PCPT-24">bit.ly/PCPT-24</a>	NIDA information for community leaders on potentially lifesaving drugs and how they are being administered.
<b>“Signs of Substance Abuse and Addiction”</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/PCPT-25">bit.ly/PCPT-25</a>	NIDA’s <b>“Easy to Read Drug Facts.”</b> Great for faith-based and community leaders to download and share. <a href="http://bit.ly/PCPT-26">bit.ly/PCPT-26</a>



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## Federal Resources — General

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RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
<p><b>“Pathways to Safer Opioid Use”</b> <a href="https://www.health.gov/HCCQ/Training-Pathways">Health.gov/HCCQ/Training-Pathways</a></p>	<p><a href="https://www.health.gov">Health.gov</a> shows how to engage the medical system more proactively by using this interactive tool. Designed for health professionals.</p>
<p><b>Guideline Resources: “Patient and Partner Tools”</b> <a href="https://bit.ly/PCPT-27">bit.ly/PCPT-27</a></p>	<p>These CDC tools help patients and doctors chose treatment options after the risks and benefits are carefully considered.</p>
<p><b>“Safer, More Effective Pain Management”</b> <a href="https://bit.ly/PCPT-28">bit.ly/PCPT-28</a></p>	<p>A CDC resource to inform providers’ ability to offer safer, more effective pain management and supports clinical decision making about prescribing opioids.</p>
<p><b>Substance Abuse Treatment Helpline:</b> 1-800-662-HELP <a href="https://bit.ly/PCPT-29">bit.ly/PCPT-29</a></p>	<p>A confidential, free service from SAMHSA — along with referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations — that is available to individuals and family members facing substance abuse and mental health issues.</p>
<p><b>Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator</b> <a href="https://bit.ly/PCPT-30">bit.ly/PCPT-30</a></p>	<p>A robust resource from SAMHSA that helps to find a local substance abuse treatment facility.</p>
<p><b>Find a Community Health Center</b> <a href="https://FindAHealthCenter.HRSA.gov">FindAHealthCenter.HRSA.gov</a></p>	<p>HRSA’s Community Health Centers are poised to spot someone dealing with opioid addiction and help patients coordinate their care.</p>



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## Federal Resources — Youth and Family

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RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
<b>“Teen Talk”</b> <a href="https://Teens.DrugAbuse.gov">Teens.DrugAbuse.gov</a>	Learn about teen drug use and the brain. This NIDA website features videos, games, blog posts and much more!
<b>“Easy-to-Read Drug Facts”</b> <a href="https://EasyRead.DrugAbuse.gov">EasyRead.DrugAbuse.gov</a>	Videos, such as “Anyone Can Become Addicted to Drugs” and “Why are Drugs so Hard to Quit?” provide critical information in an easy-to-understand format.
<b>“What to Do If Your Teen or Young Adult Has a Problem with Drugs?”</b> <a href="https://bit.ly/PCPT-31">bit.ly/PCPT-31</a>	NIDA answers timely questions about teens and substance abuse. Helpful content to share with families and individuals in your community.
<b>“Family Checkup: Positive Parenting Prevents Drug Abuse”</b> <a href="https://DrugAbuse.Gov/Family-Checkup">DrugAbuse.Gov/Family-Checkup</a>	NIDA’s five questions highlight key parenting skills that are important in preventing the initiation and progression of drug use among youth.
<b>Health Library of Federal Adolescent Health Resources on Substance Abuse</b> <a href="https://bit.ly/PCPT-32">bit.ly/PCPT-32</a>	Office of Adolescent Health’s comprehensive library of federal resources on adolescent substance abuse, including the abuse of prescription drugs.
<b>Partnership at DrugFree.org</b> <a href="https://DrugFree.org">DrugFree.org</a>	Resources for parents or other caregivers looking for information and strategies to prevent, or stop, illicit drug use by adolescents.



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## Federal Resources — Youth and Family

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RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
<b>Get Smart About Drugs</b> <a href="http://GetSmartAboutDrugs.com">GetSmartAboutDrugs.com</a>	An online DEA resource for parents.
<b>“Growing up Drug Free: A Parent’s Guide to Prevention”</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/PCPT-33">bit.ly/PCPT-33</a>	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.
<b>“Above the Influence”</b> <a href="http://AboveTheInfluence.com">AboveTheInfluence.com</a>	The adolescent-g geared website from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).
<b>“Talk: They Will Hear You”</b> <a href="http://bit.ly/PCPT-34">bit.ly/PCPT-34</a>	Prepare for one of the most important conversations you may ever have with your kids about underage drinking using SAMHSA’s helpful app.
<b>National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day</b> <a href="http://SAMHSA.gov/Children">SAMHSA.gov/Children</a>	This yearly awareness campaign focuses on the importance of emphasizing positive mental health as part of a child’s overall development.

Finally, the Partnership Center would like to extend a special thanks to Pastor Greg Delany (Ohio) and Rev. Jeff Allen (W. Virginia) for their innovative leadership, as well as for generously sharing their insights on how faith and community leaders can play an active and instrumental role during this current national health crisis.





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## Acknowledgements

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