

Preventing Opioid Abuse



Facts

Substance Abuse

Prevention is the promotion of healthy lifestyles and norms that reduce the risks associated with use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Everyone has a part to play. 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 are doing our part to prevent opioid addiction.

Preventing opioid addiction can be compared to preventing other chronic diseases.

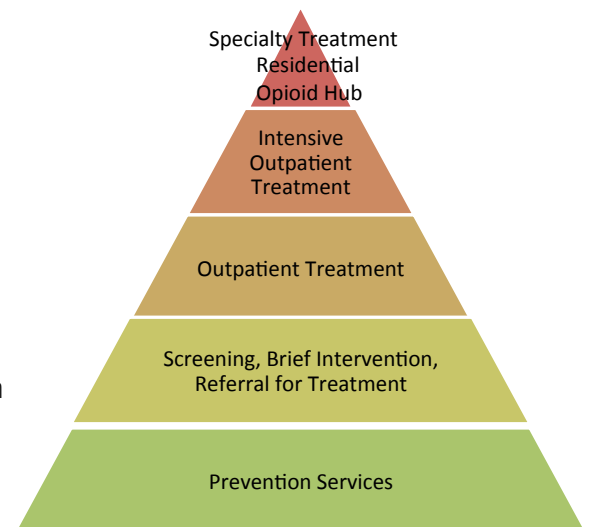
Community-wide policies that promote health, education and screening are all employed to reduce and prevent other chronic diseases. This is also true of opioid addiction. Preventing opioid addiction takes a comprehensive, long-term approach that includes information, education, early intervention and referral to treatment, community communication and mobilization, and policy setting.

Years of research show that effective substance abuse prevention:

- is targeted to reduce risks for addiction, and promote protective factors against addiction
- has multiple and connected interventions in communities, schools, families and individuals
- is sustained over time

The Health Department supports and funds proven strategies:

- for public information
- in communities
- at schools
- that provide family support and education



Facts

Prevention must start young.

Prevention must begin early – well before a young person starts engaging in risky behaviors. People admitted and treated for opioid abuse are asked when they started using. 21 is the average age for first use of opioids, somewhat older than 15, the average age for first use of alcohol.

Treatment is not prevention.

Effective medical treatment for addiction, just like effective medical treatment for any other chronic disease, has high lifelong costs. While we expand the scope of our interventions and treatment options, we must also strengthen proven prevention strategies.

The cost/benefit of prevention.

Successful prevention strategies save money. Every \$1 invested saves \$3 to \$8 in costs of health care, criminal justice and lost productivity.

– *U.S. Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration*

Health Department-funded Strategies EXAMPLES

Public Information

- VT Alcohol & Drug Information Clearinghouse – www.vadic.org
- **PARENT UP** – www.ParentUpVT.org



Community Coalitions & Regional Partnerships for Success

- Community Coalitions/Regional Partnerships for Success bring together diverse stakeholders to carry out action plans, educate youth and families, inform the public about proper storage and disposal of prescription drugs, and promote the use of the Vermont Prescription Drug Monitoring System.
- Prevention Consultants from the Health Department's 12 district offices work with coalitions and regional partnerships to provide technical assistance and promote prevention, treatment and recovery resources.

Coordinated School Health Initiatives

- Substance abuse screening and referral services
- Classroom health curricula that covers substance abuse
- Training for teachers and support staff
- Training for youth empowerment groups
- School-based parent education and support groups

Family Support and Education

- Parenting education programs
- Project Rocking Horse – parenting support group for low-income mothers