

Position Paper
OPIATE/OPIOID PREVENTION, INTERVENTION AND TREATMENT

The opiate/opioid epidemic has impacted everyone across the country regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. This is an equal opportunity epidemic where no one is immune. Yet, there is still a negative public perception about those individuals and their families who struggle with substance use disorders. The myth that it is a will power issue or “they deserve what they get” fuels the stigma that often inhibits individuals and families from reaching out and asking for help. PTAs are in a unique position to advocate for policy change, funding for treatment/prevention services, and support for those in need of assistance.

Key Facts from National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

- “Roughly 21 to 29 percent of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain misuse them.
- Between 8 and 12 percent develop an opioid use disorder.
- An estimated 4 to 6 percent who misuse prescription opioids transition to heroin.
- About 80 percent of people who use heroin first misused prescription opioids.
- Opioid overdoses increased 30 percent from July 2016 through September 2017 in 52 areas in 45 states.
- The Midwestern Region saw opioid overdoses increased 70 percent from July 2016 through September 2017.
- Opioid overdoses in large cities increased by 54 percent in 16 states.”
- “Synthetic opioids (primarily fentanyl) passed prescription opioids as the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths. In 2016, synthetic opioids were involved in nearly 50% of opioid related deaths, up from 14%.”

Recommendations for NYS PTA

There are a number of actions and programs NYS PTAs can undertake to help prevent and combat prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse.

- **Advocate for funding of evidence-based prevention, screening and early intervention services:** Evidence-based means that the initiative has been researched and proven to be effective. The National Registry on Evidence-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP) provides a listing of evidence-based and emerging practices that can be implemented in a variety of communities and settings.
- **Secure, monitor and dispose of medications:** Adults need to secure medications in a safe location. It is important to monitor and track medications. PTAs should work along with local law enforcement to promote and coordinate safe disposal of medication initiatives.
- **Advocate for and promote drug take-back programs:** These programs promote opportunities to get unwanted or unused drugs out of the medicine cabinet to be properly disposed of. These can be community wide events or to have ongoing locations where drugs can be disposed of properly year round.
- **Advocate for training of all health care prescribers on medication pain management and risks of physical dependency:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) created guidelines for prescribing opioids for chronic pain. This includes training of providers.
- **Advocate for interstate prescription monitoring program:** Prescription monitoring programs have been established in most, but not all states, to collect, maintain and monitor prescriptions. This has been shown to reduce the numbers of people “doctor shopping” for prescriptions.

- **Advocate for streamlining access to appropriate level of care services including medication assisted services:** There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach for substance use disorder treatment. Each person needs to be assessed individually based on their needs and experiences.
- **Advocate for multiple pathways for recovery including the use of peer mentors and recovery coaches:** There has been ongoing research on the strength-based approach of people in recovery to providing support for individuals and families accessing care.
- **Advocate for access to the overdose reversal medication Naloxone:** The US Surgeon General "released a public health advisory to urge more Americans to carry a potentially life saving medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose."
- **Become a member of local substance use prevention coalitions:** Coalitions are a proven prevention strategy designed to change the environmental culture of a community. PTAs represent not only parents, but community, and are vital key stakeholders in making a coalition effective.
- **Eliminate stigma:** Substance use disorders can impact anyone regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Stigma prevents people from seeking and limits access to services they desperately need. PTAs can lead the way in changing and eliminating the stigmatizing language often associated with people struggling with substance use disorders. PTAs can partner with organizations whose focus is to destigmatize the disease with new messaging and supporting a national recovery movement.
- **Share stories of long term recovery:** PTAs have a powerful voice and the means to educate its members and the community. Changing the story from one of disaster to one of hope shows that people with substance use disorders can heal. PTAs should exercise caution to properly vet any organization or provider they partner with, assuring they are licensed and/or funded by the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).

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