



International Overdose Awareness Day

August 31st

Substance Use Disorder

Advocating for substance use disorder (SUD) involves raising awareness, promoting understanding, and supporting policies that improve the lives of individuals affected by substance use.

Stigma, misinformation, and policy gaps continue to create barriers for people seeking care. This toolkit is designed to equip you with the knowledge, resources, and strategies to advocate for compassionate, evidence-based treatment and policies that save lives and support recovery.



Our goal is Health

Here are some ways you can advocate for SUD:

➤ Educate Yourself and Others

- **Learn About SUD:** Understand the medical, psychological, and social aspects of substance use disorders, including the risk factors for SUD.
- **Share Knowledge:** Use social media, community events, and conversations to educate others about SUD, reducing stigma and misinformation.

➤ Support Policy Changes

- **Advocate for Harm Reduction:** Support policies like needle exchange programs, supervised consumption sites, and naloxone distribution.
- **Narcan education:** Learn how to use Narcan and carry Narcan with you in your car or bag. Understanding how to use Narcan is just as important as knowing CPR.
 - [State Naloxone Access Rules and Resources - SAFE Project](#)
 - <https://narcan.com/how-to-use-narcan-nasal-spray>
- **Promote Access to Treatment:** Advocate for insurance coverage for treatment, mental health services, and medication-assisted treatment (MAT).
- **Encourage Criminal Justice Reform:** Support diversion programs and alternatives to incarceration for non-violent drug offenses.

➤ Participate in Community Initiatives

- **Join or Organize Support Groups:** Participate in or start support groups for those affected by SUD.
- **Volunteer:** Work with organizations that provide services to individuals with SUD, such as rehabilitation centers, homeless shelters, or harm reduction programs.



➤ Use Your Voice in Media and Advocacy

- **Write Articles and Op-eds:** Share stories, research, and opinions in local newspapers or online platforms.
- **Engage with Legislators:** Contact local representatives, attend town hall meetings, and advocate for SUD-related legislation.
- **Use Social Media:** Share stories, support campaigns, and promote awareness through posts and hashtags.

➤ Support Families and Loved Ones

- **Provide Emotional Support:** Offer understanding and compassion to those affected by SUD and their families.
- **Share Resources:** Help connect individuals and families with support services, treatment options, and educational materials.

➤ Engage in Research and Professional Development

- **Contribute to Research:** Support or participate in research efforts focused on SUD treatment and prevention.
- **Pursue Training:** If you're in the healthcare field, seek specialized training in addiction medicine, counseling, or social work.

➤ Challenge Stigma

- **Promote Respectful Language:** Encourage the use of person-first language (e.g., "person with a substance use disorder" instead of "addict").
 - [Changing Federal Terminology Regarding Substance Use and Substance Use Disorders](#) (2017)
 - [Words Matter – Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking About Addiction](#) (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2021). More examples: [here](#)
- **Share Success Stories:** Highlight stories of recovery and resilience to inspire hope and understanding.



Resources For Patients

Advocating for SUD requires a compassionate and informed approach. Every effort contributes to a more supportive and understanding society.

Information and Education

- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**: Provides information on SUD, mental health, and treatment options, as well as a national helpline.
- **National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)**: Offers research-based information on drugs, SUD, and treatment methods.

Support Groups and Online Communities

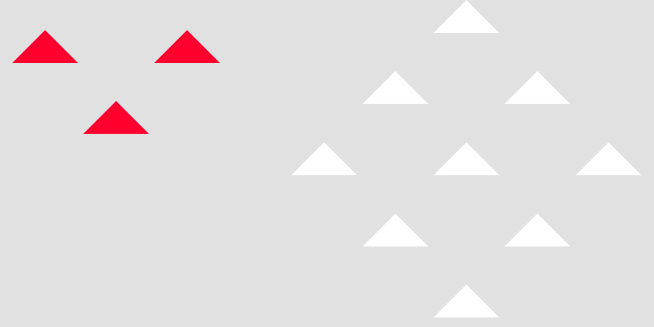
- **Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)**: Offers online meetings and resources for those struggling with alcohol use disorder.
- **Narcotics Anonymous (NA)**: Provides information and virtual meetings for individuals dealing with drug addiction.
- **SMART Recovery**: A non-religious 12-step program that offers online meetings and forums focusing on self-management and recovery training.

Treatment Locator Tools

- **SAMHSA Treatment Locator**: Helps find treatment facilities and resources based on location and type of treatment needed.
- **Addiction Resource**: Provides information about various treatment options and locates facilities.

Telehealth and Online Therapy

- **BetterHelp**: An online platform offering therapy, including for SUD, with licensed professionals.
- **Talkspace**: Provides online therapy sessions with licensed therapists, including those specializing in addiction.



Hotlines and Immediate Support

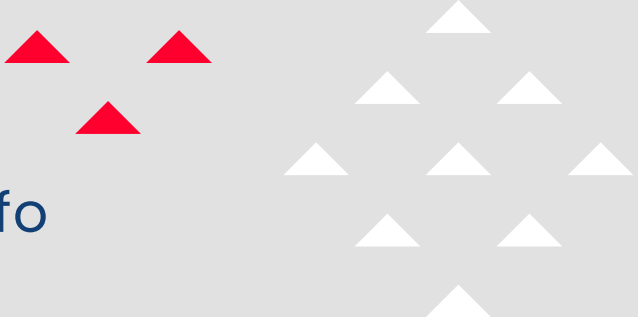
- **SAMHSA's National Helpline:** A confidential, free, 24-hour helpline for individuals and families facing mental and/or substance use disorders (1-800-662-HELP).
- **Crisis Text Line:** Offers free, 24/7 support via text for those in crisis (Text HOME to 741741).

Resources for Families and Loved Ones

- **Al-Anon Family Groups:** Provides support for friends and families of individuals with alcohol use disorder.
- **Nar-Anon Family Groups:** Offers support for families and loved ones affected by someone's drug addiction.

Educational Videos and Online Courses

- **Coursera** and **edX:** Offer courses on addiction, mental health, and treatment methods.
- **YouTube:** Channels like "Drug Policy Alliance" and "Partnership to End Addiction" provide educational content.



Other Useful Resources & Info

1. Stigma of overdose

- a. Promote respectful language: [Changing Federal Terminology Regarding Substance Use and Substance Use Disorders](#) (2017)
- b. [Words Matter – Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking About Addiction](#) (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2021). More examples: [here](#)

2. How to use Narcan Directions

- a. Understanding how to use Narcan is just as important as knowing CPR.
- b. Video to share <https://narcan.com/how-to-use-narcan-nasal-spray>

3. How to find free narcan

4. How to support someone after overdose/Meetings/resources

5. Risk factors for overdose

- a. [Canva infographic](#)
- b. [Locating Data on Risk Factors for Opioid Overdose](#)

6. How to advocate for access to treatment to avoid overdose

- a. [Campaign to repeal the ban on food stamps for people with drug convictions](#)
- b. [Campaign to Join the Fight for Overdose Prevention Centers](#)

c. Amplify Personal Stories

- i. Stories change hearts and minds. If you're comfortable, share your journey or uplift the voices of others in recovery. Your story could be the one that inspires someone to seek help. #RecoveryIsPossible #ShareYourStory #EndTheStigma #SUDawareness
- ii. "Harm reduction saves lives. Use your voice to spread awareness about the importance of naloxone, syringe exchanges, and safe spaces. #HarmReduction #SaveLives"

iii. [Examples of sharing your story](#)

7. [Social Media Toolkit – SAMHSA](#)



Other Useful Resources & Info *Continued...*

LGBTQIA+

- **Overdose Rates Among LGBTQIA+ Youth:** National data indicates that LGBTQIA+ youth have a higher incidence of overdosing on substances like opioids and stimulants compared to non-LGBTQ youth. This is exacerbated by stressors such as rejection, bullying, and trauma. Transgender women, in particular, are at a higher risk for overdosing due to elevated rates of methamphetamine use ([Hazelden Betty Ford, NCDA](#))
- **Rising Drug Use and Overdose Risk:** LGBTQIA+ teens are more likely to engage in substance use, which increases the risk of overdoses. LGBTQ youth have significantly higher rates of drug use compared to their heterosexual peers, with over 11% using prescription drugs without a prescription in the last year, increasing their susceptibility to overdose ([National Institute on Drug Abuse, The Trevor Project](#))
- **Impact of Stigma:** LGBTQIA+ individuals often face high rates of discrimination, trauma, and stigma, leading to higher substance use rates. For example, youth who experienced physical harm due to their LGBTQ identity had nearly twice the odds of misusing prescription drugs ([BioMed Central The Trevor Project](#))
- **Substance Use Among LGBTQIA+ Youth:** LGBTQIA+ individuals are *1.5 times more likely* to use illicit drugs compared to the general population, increasing their risk of overdose. This risk is compounded by the higher rates of mental health disorders among LGBTQIA+ youth, with up to 45% having co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders ([NCDASCleanSlate Centers](#))

Fun Facts!

Buprenorphine is one of the most effective medications available, with a number needed to treat (NNT) of only 2 for treatment retention and 53 for preventing overdose death. Compare that to common standard of care medications such as antihypertensives (NNT 125 for preventing death), statins (NNT 83 for preventing death in patients with known heart disease), or aspirin during STEMI (42 for preventing death)

(sources: ncbi.nlm.nih.gov, pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov, ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)