

## The Role of Educators in the Opioid Crisis

**Educators can play an important role in combating Minnesota's opioid crisis, from awareness to preventative action to personal support of affected students.**

No part of America is untouched by the opioid crisis, including school systems. Children living in the care of parents with opioid use disorder may miss school more often and have an increased risk of emotional and behavioral issues.<sup>1</sup> The opioid crisis has led to an increase in the number of children removed from their homes and placed in foster care, according to the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System. It's important for schools to help these traumatized students succeed. Only 58 percent of children involved in the foster care system will finish high school by age 19 as compared to the national average of 87 percent in the general population.<sup>2</sup>

Schools can educate students, families and professional teams about the dangers of opioid use and help put prevention and recovery methods in place. Outside of the home, students spend the majority of their time at school, which puts educators in a unique position to recognize hidden trauma or a change in a child's behavior.

According to Bill Bly, an Advanced Clinical Counselor, "I believe that we need to educate at a much younger age than we do now. But again, because of the disease of denial, many folks are going to say, well, we don't need that in my town, we don't need that in my school, that's for down the road."

## If you are an educator ...

Create a safe environment and positive culture for students

Provide prevention programs that can be delivered onsite

Help mitigate factors that can make students vulnerable to opioid use disorder

Offer support for students in recovery or students who have family members in recovery

## As an outcome, students should learn to ...<sup>3</sup>

Recognize the signs and symptoms of opioid use disorder

Know the dangers of opioid use disorder and its impact on a person's life, both physically and emotionally

Understand how and where to find help

Realize that anyone who takes prescription opioids, even when properly prescribed, can become dependent on them

## Why should educators care?

**More Americans die of opioid overdoses than car crashes. It's affecting everyone from cities and suburbs to rural America and every age demographic. The U.S. Department of Education refers to opioid use disorder as "the crisis next door." While the cause of harmful opioid use varies, no community, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation is immune.**

1 The effects of parental opioid use on the parent-child relationship and children's developmental and behavioral outcomes: a systematic review of published reports (Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health)

2 Supporting Young People Transitioning from Foster Care: Findings from a National Survey (Child Trends)

3 Combating the Opioid Crisis: Schools, Students, Families (U.S. Department of Education)