

## 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. (National Institutes of Health) 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 50 percent of children involved in the foster care system will graduate high school, and only 3-4 percent will go on to complete a four-year degree. (National Foster Youth Institute).

Schools can educate students, families and professional teams about the dangers of opioid use and help put prevention and recovery methods in place. A 2022 survey found that two-thirds of students said they needed help with their mental or emotional health, but less than half actually sought help. (National Association of Secondary School Principals)

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 misuse

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

## As an outcome, students should learn to ... <sup>2</sup>

Recognize signs and symptoms of opioid misuse

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 overdose 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 case of harm opioid use varies, no community, race, ethnicity or sexual orientation is immune.**

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

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