

A PROJECT OF PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC MEDIA

# BATTLING OPIOIDS

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Pennsylvania has one of the highest opioid overdose death rates in the nation. Every day, thousands of Pennsylvanians — mothers and fathers, children, neighbors — struggle to overcome addiction. Rural and urban, rich and poor, the opioid crisis affects all of us.

Neither people nor communities can fight this battle alone. Public media has the unique potential to connect Pennsylvanians across boundaries, and, in an unprecedented collaboration, it is doing just that. Our local reporting and programming have covered the opioid crisis for years — but now we are uniting to show how Pennsylvanians statewide are confronting the epidemic of heroin and prescription opioid abuse. We are increasing awareness and empathy to reduce the stigma around opioid use, aid prevention, and help people find treatment.

Pennsylvania Public Media stations WHYY (Philadelphia), WITF (Harrisburg), WLVT/PBS39 (Greater Lehigh Valley), WPSU (State College), WQED (Pittsburgh), WQLN (Northwestern Pennsylvania), and WVIA (Northeastern Pennsylvania) are collaborating to produce educational programming that focuses on the opioid crisis and its impact. Watch videos produced by each station and keep up with our reporting.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### *SPREAD AWARENESS*

- Participate in local conversations.
- Let your local, state, and federal elected officials know that this issue is important to you. Tell them about the extent of the opioid problem in your area.

- Share information:
  - Pennsylvania has one of the highest opioid overdose death rates in the nation, with 5,443 deaths between July 2016 and July 2017. That's more than 14 people per day.
  - In 2016, approximately 4 times as many Pennsylvanians died of opioid overdose than died in motor vehicle accidents.
  - In the first half of 2018, more than 900 babies were born with neonatal abstinence syndrome in Pennsylvania.
  - In 2016, the opioid crisis cost Pennsylvania \$53 billion in lost work, lost lives, and medical costs.
  - Pennsylvania's Get Help Now hotline, 1-800-662-HELP, received 4,520 calls in the first half of 2018.
  - In the first half of 2018, emergency medical responders provided more than 6,000 doses of naloxone to people experiencing opioid overdose.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's online guide to treating heroin and opioid addiction ([www.pa.gov/guides/opioid-epidemic](http://www.pa.gov/guides/opioid-epidemic)) is an excellent source of information about the epidemic and the local resources available.

### **REDUCE STIGMA**

Stigma often prevents people who are addicted to heroin or prescription opioids from getting the help they need. The more everyone understands that opioid addiction is not a moral failing but a chemical dependency, the more those who struggle with addiction will realize that they are not alone and that they deserve help.

You can help be a part of the solution by increasing awareness in your community:

- Watch and share the stories available on [BattlingOpioids.org](https://www.battlingopioids.org).
- Be part of the conversation on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

### **HELP PREVENT OPIOID ADDICTION**

- Talk to your doctor. Some people need opioids to manage their pain, yet as a patient it's important to be aware of the potential for addiction. If you are in pain, talk to your doctor about alternatives to opioid treatment and whether they will work for you. If you have had problems with opioid addiction, or other substance abuse issues, make sure your medical team knows your history.
- Dispose of medications. If you have leftover opioid medications, dispose of them safely. You may be able to use a local Prescription Drug Take-back Box Program. Some local organizations also have mobile drug take-back vans, and/or will come out to events in your area to collect unneeded medications.

### **SUPPORT RECOVERY**

- Get to know recovery organizations in your community. They can help you support loved ones who are struggling with addiction, and give you opportunities to help others.
- Share the PA state helpline — 1-800-662-HELP — and website ([www.pa.gov/guides/opioid-epidemic](https://www.pa.gov/guides/opioid-epidemic)).

## **LEARN HOW TO RESPOND TO SAVE A LIFE**

Learn how to administer naloxone to assist someone in distress. When given during an overdose, naloxone blocks the effects of opioids on the brain and restores breathing within two to eight minutes. You can find online training through a Pennsylvania Department of Health-approved naloxone resource site: [Get Naloxone Now](#) or [PA Virtual Training Network](#).

## **GET HELP**

- If you or a loved one are dealing with opioid addiction, call 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-622-4357) or visit [www.pa.gov/guides/opioid-epidemic](http://www.pa.gov/guides/opioid-epidemic) to find resources and information.
- If you are having an emergency, **call 911**.
- Help in other states:

### **Delaware**

Helpline:  
800-652-2929 (New  
Castle County)  
800-345-6785 (Kent and  
Sussex Counties)

### **New Jersey**

Website: [reachnj.gov](http://reachnj.gov)  
Helpline: 1-844-ReachNJ  
(1-844-732-2465)

### **Ohio**

Website: [mha.ohio.gov/  
News/-GCOAT-Opiate-  
Action-Team](http://mha.ohio.gov/News/-GCOAT-Opiate-Action-Team)  
Helpline: 1-877-275-6364

### **Maryland**

Website: [beforeitstoolate.  
maryland.gov](http://beforeitstoolate.maryland.gov)  
Maryland Crisis Connect  
Hotline: Call 211, Press 1

### **New York**

Website: [combataddic-  
tion.ny.gov/get-help](http://combataddiction.ny.gov/get-help)