

CONCLUSION

While substance use and misuse, dependence and addiction, and overdose and unintentional death are on the rise across the United States and in Connecticut, parents and caregivers have opportunities to recognize and mitigate risks and provide protective environments for their children.



ADVICE FOR PARENTS:

1. Learn about opioids, their uses, and risks so you can be prepared to advocate for your child as well as answer their questions. And be aware of the physical and behavioral signs of opioid use, dependence, and addiction.
2. Recognize that opioid misuse often begins with mental health challenges and that healthy coping strategies are both safer and more effective.
3. Have conversations about substance use with your child early and consistently.
4. Ask trusted healthcare and dental providers about non-opioid alternatives to manage your child's pain from any injuries, dental work, or other healthcare issues and administer prescription medications only as instructed. Consult with your healthcare provider or prescriber to understand the potential risks and side effects of prescription pain medications.
5. Monitor, secure, and properly dispose of any prescription pain medications in your home.
6. Consult with a healthcare provider to discuss treatment options for opioid misuse. There are both inpatient and outpatient programs that combine medication, health services, and psychotherapy.
7. Practice self-care, which may include your own counseling or attending a support group. Use your strength to support your family.
8. Call on your social supports if uncertainty, worry, or overwhelm take root. You don't have to carry the burden alone.
9. Use immediate assistance lines and resources listed in our appendix.