



## CARA - TASK FORCE GOAL

Comprehensive approach to addressing the Opioid Epidemic

### OPIOIDS - WHAT ARE THEY?

- Opioids are synthetic drugs, usually Rx'd painkiller medication (oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, codeine). Also includes illicit drugs such as fentanyl, and carfentanyl.
- Opiates include naturally derived drugs such as heroin, opium.

### WHY DO PEOPLE MOVE FROM PRESCRIPTION DRUGS TO HEROIN?

Prescription opioids (pain pills) and heroin are chemically similar and can produce a similar high.

- In NJ, heroin is cheaper and easier to get than prescription opioids, so some people switch to using heroin instead.
- According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, nearly 80 percent of Americans using heroin (including those in treatment) reported misusing prescription opioids prior to using heroin.

### ARE SOME MORE AT-RISK THAN OTHERS?

While anyone can become addicted, there are a few groups that DHMAS has identified as being especially at-risk for Rx Opioids: (Programs offered for free in Hunterdon and Somerset Counties)

- a. **Older Adults** – As we age, pain and mobility can become issues in our daily lives. Knowing about pain management alternatives and other best practices can help reduce or avoid a person's need for prescription pain medications.
- b. **Athletes** – Teens and Young adults who participate in athletics may be at a greater risk of prescription opioid use because of potential injury, and teammates sharing medications (medicine misuse). **ACCESS FREE TOOLKITS** <https://tinyurl.com/SCC-OpioidToolkits>

### DRUG OVERDOSE TRENDS

CDC recently estimated that drug overdose deaths surpassed 72,000 in 2017. This represents an increase of more than 6,000 deaths over the estimate for 2016.

- o 200 drug overdose deaths every single day, or one every eight minutes.
- § The increase is based on a continued surge in deaths involving synthetic opioids, a category that includes fentanyl. In NJ, we lost 2,222 lives to drug overdoses in 2016.

# BEST PRACTICES

ESTABLISHING NEW MEDICINE NORMS



## SAFE MEDICINE PRACTICES

- **Safe Use** – Take medicines only as prescribed. Assign ONE adult for safe dispensing.
- **Safe Storage** – Use a MedLock Box, or keep out of easily accessible locations.
- **Safe Disposal** – Use a Medicine Drop Box

## SAFE MEDICINE DISPOSAL

### HOW TO SAFE DISPOSE

**Solid Medications:** pills, patches, and inhalers, etc. – including Rx, OTC, and Pet Meds

- Leave medications in the container.
- Remove any personal information.
- Bring to your local Medicine Drop Box location.

#### **Syringes/Needles:**

- Ask your pharmacist about safe needle disposal boxes or find a Safe Syringe Disposal Program near you.

#### **Liquid Medications:**

- In a sealable bag or coffee can, make the medicine appear unattractive by mixing with coffee grounds or kitty litter. Dispose in household trash.

### MED DISPOSAL BOX LOCATIONS:

- Find locations in Hunterdon and Somerset: **Safe Coalition Website**.....[tinyurl.com/SCCMedDropBox](http://tinyurl.com/SCCMedDropBox)
- Download PDF of “HOW2 - Hunterdon & Somerset Safe Disposal”.....[tinyurl.com/SCCResourceGroup](http://tinyurl.com/SCCResourceGroup)
- More locations, visit.....[www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/meddrop/Pages/Locations.aspx](http://www.njconsumeraffairs.gov/meddrop/Pages/Locations.aspx)

## EMPOWERING PATIENTS DURING DR VISITS

***Check-up, Check List: Before your doctor writes a prescription for painkiller medication, such as Vicodin, Oxycotin, or Codeine:***

1. Always **ASK** about the alternative treatment options.
2. Ask about the **risks of addiction and overdose** related to painkiller medications.
3. Make sure your doctor and pharmacist or school nurse/physician know about any medications you are taking to **avoid unwanted side-effects**.

