

# EXTENSION'S Role in Addressing Wisconsin's Opioid Crisis



**E**xtension has a long history of delivering programs that promote whole-body health and well-being, including programs focused on behavioral health issues. With access to the latest university and clinical research and an established network of specialists, educators and local partners, we are uniquely positioned to respond to issues like the opioid crisis. Perhaps most importantly, we live in the places we work and understand the devastating impacts that behavioral and mental health crises can have on our friends, families and communities. For these reasons, we strive to lead with empathy and compassion and always tailor our programming to specific local conditions.

## Our approach

As experts in community outreach and education, we focus on the **promotion, prevention** and **alleviation** aspects of behavioral health intervention. We rely on this multifaceted approach when working with *youth, adult* and *community-wide* audiences to help minimize the risk factors that contribute to substance abuse and dependence.

## PROMOTION



These strategies are designed to create environments that support behavioral health and individual ability to withstand challenges.

### Direct programs for youth, families and adults

- ▶ We deliver programs like *Strengthening Families* and *Raising a Thinking Child* that grow family relationships, build communication skills and enhance child executive functioning.
- ▶ Programming like *Good Drugs Gone Bad* encourage safe disposal and safe storage of prescription medications.
- ▶ Through collaborations with 4-H clubs, we teach young people positive and essential life skills like decision-making, problem-solving and healthy communication strategies.
- ▶ We offer education on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how they influence future decision-making and addiction risk potential.

- ▶ Extension educators and partners work with our Language Access support unit to ensure that all Wisconsin residents have equitable access to health literacy.
- ▶ Our program participants learn to manage stress and lessen dependence on medication and other coping mechanisms through educational offerings like *Taking Care of You*.

### Community-focused response

- ▶ Extension educators partner with communities and coalitions to administer youth-focused risk behavior surveys, helping schools and communities to understand emerging behavioral trends and identify potential areas for future programming support.
- ▶ We educate the public about drug drop boxes for safe prescription disposal plus locking up prescriptions to mitigate misuse.
- ▶ Our outreach efforts support the development and work of community coalitions like the Northern Oconto Substance Prevention Partnership.
- ▶ The racial justice training initiatives provided by our educators and partners focus on advancing and understanding race and implicit bias.



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## PREVENTION



These interventions are intended to prevent or reduce the risk of developing behavioral health problems like underage alcohol use, prescription drug misuse and illicit drug use.

### Direct programs for youth, families and adults

- ▶ Extension educators demonstrate common drug hiding places with mock teen bedroom and mock teen backpack examples to educate parents and school staff on drug use warning signs.

### Community-focused response

- ▶ We work with and support coalitions that educate the public on drug use, opioids and addiction.
- ▶ We support Clean Sweep sharps disposal and prescription drug drop off programs that allow for the safe disposal of prescription drugs, including opioids.



## ALLEVIATION



Extension's role includes helping individuals and communities address the consequences of the opioid crisis.

### Direct programs for youth, families and adults

- ▶ We provide Trauma-Informed Care training to those who work with child victims of the opioid crisis to reduce the adversity these children face in their communities.
- ▶ Through the FoodWise nutrition education program, we guide adults in treatment centers to adopt a healthier lifestyle during their program and when they return home.
- ▶ Our educational outreach programs support grandparents raising grandchildren as a result of the opioid crisis.

### Community-focused response

- ▶ Educators from our Institute for Community Development collaborate with youth leaders to educate local government officials about opioid treatment needs.

Contact **Amber Canto** for more information on Extension's opioid programming.

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