




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: John D. Frassinelli, Bureau Chief 
Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education

DATE: September 25, 2018

SUBJECT: Substance Use Prevention and Overdose Awareness

As you are no doubt aware, Connecticut is facing an epidemic in opioid-related use and dependence. Whether prescribed and misused or obtained illegally, opioids, and progression to heroin use, contribute to an increased risk of overdose and death. As recent events have demonstrated, the dangers associated with illicit substance use take many forms. The substance that caused the New Haven Green overdoses was K2, an herbal material laced with additional chemicals. This class of substances may also be referred to as “synthetic cannabinoids.”

While many perceive this issue as one requiring law enforcement solutions, this public health crisis must first be addressed to avert additional overdoses, and because evidence demonstrates that most substance use disorders begin in adolescence, educate school-age children and families on the dangers associated with substance use. Often, opiates (opioids) can be prescribed to address pain associated with injury. Prolonged use, however, can lead to misuse and addiction, and lead to the pursuit of easily obtained, less expensive options, including heroin. Due to the widespread adulteration of marijuana and heroin, and the inability to know what deadly substances may have been added to these drugs, students may not fully comprehend the potential dangers.

While not effective in reversing the effects of K2, one safe, accessible and effective treatment to counteract an overdose by opiates, including heroin, is Naloxone, commonly known by the brand name Narcan. Naloxone is an opiate antagonist that immediately neutralizes the toxic effects of opiates and reverses an overdose. With the introduction of other components added to heroin found on the streets, the risk of overdose is multiplied substantially.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) encourages each local education agency (LEA), in consultation with their school medical advisor and school nurse, to engage community health care facilities, emergency medical personnel, local health authorities, law enforcement and other partners, to develop a substance use prevention plan that includes: provision of education and resources for both students and staff; identification of potential risks to students; and response plans in cases of toxic reactions to substances, legal or otherwise. Regardless of whether your LEA has faced issues of drug use, included in the discussion of district and school substance use prevention plans and policies should be consideration of maintaining Naloxone in medical formularies and training personnel in its use.

Additionally, Section 2 of Public Act 18-182: *An Act concerning Minor Revisions and Additions to the Education Statutes*, recently amended Section 10-16b of the supplement to the Connecticut General Statutes: *Prescribed Courses of Study*, to add “instruction related to opioid use and related disorders” to the substance use prevention curriculum requirement under health and safety education. See: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2018/ACT/pa/pdf/2018PA-00182-R00HB-05446-PA.pdf>. The attached document includes links to resources that may be helpful in addressing and providing education on substance use prevention and opioid and overdose awareness.

The State Alcohol and Drug Policy Council (ADPC), in partnership with the CSDE, will be conducting a survey of LEAs in the coming weeks to learn more from schools with regard to this issue. Please consider responding to the survey to assist in the State’s efforts to address substance use prevention and treatment.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Stephanie Knutson, School Nursing and Health Education Consultant, at stephanie.knutson@ct.gov, 860-807-2108 or Scott Newgass, Social Work/Trauma Education Consultant, at scott.newgass@ct.gov, or by telephone at 860-807-2044.

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Attachment

Substance Use Prevention and Opioid Awareness Resources

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) Staff Contact Information:

Stephanie Knutson, School Nursing and Health Education Consultant: stephanie.knutson@ct.gov or 860-807-2108

Scott Newgass, School Social Work/Trauma Education Consultant: scott.newgass@ct.gov or 860-807-2044.

John D. Frassinelli, Bureau Chief: Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education: john.frassinelli@ct.gov or 860-807-2050

Resources:

- The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) worked with educators to create a study guide to supplement the documentary, *Chasing the Dragon: The Life of an Opiate Addict*. The documentary can be viewed at <https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/ctd>. The educator's guide can be accessed at <https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/publication/chasing-dragon-study-guide-educators>.
- *Drugs of Abuse*, a resource publication from the DEA, delivers clear, scientific information about drugs in a factual, straightforward way. This guide covers topics including the Controlled Substances Act and introduces drug classes including narcotics, stimulants, marijuana/cannabis, inhalants, steroids, and more. *Drugs of Abuse* also provides information about drugs of concern and designer drugs, including synthetic opioids and "bath salts." The guide can be found at https://www.dea.gov/pr/multimedia-library/publications/drug_of_abuse.pdf
- The DEA partnered with Discovery Education to create **Operation Prevention**. Operation Prevention's mission is to educate students about the true impacts of opioids and encourage conversations in the home and classroom. The Operation Prevention website provides science-based classroom resources for all grade ranges including digital classroom lessons, educator guides, virtual field trips, and a self-paced module: "The Science of Addiction: The Stories of Teens." This module was developed to align with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the National Health Education Standards (NHES), and can be found at <https://app.operationprevention.com/>. The educator's guide can be accessed at <https://www.operationprevention.com/>.
- **Connecticut Clearinghouse**, located at Wheeler Clinic in Plainville, and supported through funding provided by DMHAS, has an excellent library of training and program resources available for loan. The Clearinghouse can be accessed online at <http://www.ctclearinghouse.org/> or by telephone at 800-232-4424.

Substance Use Prevention and Opioid Awareness Resources, continued

- Additional information regarding opioid overdose prevention and Naloxone can be found through the **State Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)** at <http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?a=2902&q=509650>.
- **System of Care** clinics have the capacity to address more complex psychiatric issues with the support of medical staff. A listing of community collaboratives participating in the System of Care, along with their respective service areas, can be found through the State Department of Children and Families (DCF) at <https://portal.ct.gov/DCF/Behavioral-Health-Partnership/Care-Coordination>.
- For assistance and information about substance use disorder treatment and recovery, contact the **Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR)** at <https://ccar.us>.
- For youth development and support services, a list of **Connecticut Youth Service Bureaus** and their coverage areas can be found through the Connecticut Youth Services Association (CYSA) at <https://www.ctyouthservices.org/>.
- **Connecticut 211 Infoline**, a United Way program that provides information on referrals, can be accessed at <http://www.infoline.org/> or by simply dialing 211.