Since 1999, we have seen a six-fold increase in the number of opioid overdose deaths each year and a staggering total of nearly 400,000 lives lost.*

For families struggling with a loved one’s substance use, whether it is prescription pain medicine, heroin or other opioids, these numbers are terrifying, overwhelming and discouraging. When they reach out to the Partnership, they are desperate for help and frantic that their child might become the next statistic.

Our Helpline staff and Parent Coaches assure families that there is hope of recovery and that they are not alone in their journey to find help for their child. Our trained and caring specialists listen and offer one-on-one help, assist in developing an action plan and connect families to science-based tools and resources.

These support services for families are a central component of the Medicine Abuse Project. Through this multi-year initiative that encompasses direct services; events and campaigns with the Surgeon General and government agencies; customized, state-specific outreach; corporate partnerships; communication campaigns; and community initiatives, we are committed to driving down overdose deaths. We are bringing together a coalition of supporters to give guidance to families as they help their sons and daughters struggling with substance use, ensure that treatment for opioid use disorders is available, affordable and rooted in science and explore innovative ways to use technology to help families find treatment and support.

With our recent merger with Center on Addiction, we are on a mission to transform how our nation addresses addiction. As part of the newly merged organization, the Medicine Abuse Project will continue to partner with states across the country to deliver local, customized family services, advocate for a federal funding stream for family support services, explore ways to use technology to further our reach and impact and work to ensure adequate insurance coverage for addiction treatment. We invite you to join with us in these efforts as a Medicine Abuse Project sponsor or supporter.

* source: CDC
† on average in 2018

Overview

Frontlines for Families

Extended Hours on the Helpline

To help meet the increasing need for personalized support and family services in the midst of today’s opioid epidemic, and thanks to the support of Google and other generous funders, we extended the hours of our Helpline to Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. EDT – 12:00 a.m. EDT. Weekend hours on Saturday and Sunday will continue to be 12:00 p.m. EDT – 5:00 p.m. EDT.

The Helpline is staffed by our trained and caring Parent Support Specialists who are ready to listen, help parents find answers and make an action plan for their child. Our specialists offer parents and caregivers the support and resources needed to care for a loved one who is struggling with substances. Families can connect with the Helpline via the website, drugfree.org, by phone at 855-DRUGFREE, through texting a message to 55753 and Facebook Messenger. Help is available in English and Spanish.

We know from research that empowering parents and caregivers with evidence-based information and support is critical to ensuring better outcomes for their loved one. We are so pleased to be extending our availability to families for even more hours each day, particularly during the later evening hours when parents are home from work and have more time to reach out. This expansion of the service also allows us to reach more families on the West Coast during after-work hours."

Rachel Chernick
Director of Clinical Research
Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

3 Ways to Connect With Our Parent Specialists

MESSAGE
Facebook Messenger
M-F, 9am-9pm EDT
& Weekends: 12pm-9pm EDT
CALL
1-855-DRUGFREE
M-F, 9am-9pm EDT
& Weekends: 12pm-9pm EDT
TEXT to 55753
Receive a message to 55753 anytime

Discover bios in English. Learnés nos español. 

* source: CDC
† on average in 2018
Parent Coaching

After first connecting with our Helpline, many families find support through the Partnership’s Parent Coaching program, which now boasts more than 300 volunteer Parent Coaches nationwide. Families in this program are matched with another parent or family member who has lived experience with their own child’s substance use. This peer-to-peer coaching offers families the support of someone who can offer guidance from a personal perspective. Parents learn how to stay connected to their loved one and receive encouragement from someone who has walked in their shoes.

We hosted several Parent Coach trainings across the country in 2018, thanks to our partners: Utah Support Advocates for Recovery Awareness (USARA) in Salt Lake City, UT; Hope Sheds Light in Toms River, NJ; Prevention Links in Roselle, NJ; Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA; Pennsylvania Parent Panel Advisory Council in Harrisburg, PA; PreventionFirst! in Norwood, OH; the TASC Community Grant Initiative in Phoenix, AZ.

During each weekend-long session, devoted parents were trained through the CMC:FFC’s Invitation to Change Approach, an incorporation of Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT), Motivational Interviewing; and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. Following their training, Parent Coaches committed to six months of providing one-on-one support over the phone to other parents in need of help.

2018 National Rx Drug Abuse & Heroin Summit

We were honored to attend the 2018 National Rx Drug Abuse & Heroin Summit in Atlanta, GA where we also led a panel discussion, “Empowering Families: How to Address a Loved One’s Opioid Use and Become a Family Advocate,” focused on the family’s role in reversing a national public health epidemic.

The presentation – to a standing-room-only audience – also recognized the various obstacles families encounter when seeking treatment, highlighted the resources and tools that can empower families to take action to engage loved ones in treatment and informed parents about the support and critical information they need to become effective advocates.

Google and DEA Collaborate to Promote National Prescription Take Back Day

Together with Google and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), we encouraged families and individuals to participate in the 15th annual National Prescription Drug Take Back Day in March 2018. Take Back Day offers consumers an opportunity to take simple, effective steps to help curb the country’s opioid crisis by disposing of excess, unwanted and expired prescription medicine. Google made it easier for people to find nearby Take Back events using Google Maps technology. Through a direct link on Google’s home page during the event, individuals were able to find a Take Back location near them, while learning more about the Partnership’s science-based resources.

Google’s support of parents and families didn’t end with Take Back Day, as Google matched dollar-for-dollar every donation made to the Partnership from Take Back Day until June 9. This match significantly helped to ensure that the Helpline and our free family support services continued operating at capacity to reach every family in need of help.

Working with Partners

Surgeon General Facebook Live

Partnership President Fred Muench, Ph.D., moderated a Facebook Live with United States Surgeon General, Vice Admiral Jerome M. Adams, M.D., M.P.H., and Susan Knade, a Partnership Parent Coach whose daughter is in long-term recovery.

The first part of the online event included a discussion on the nation’s current opioid epidemic and explored what families can do to be part of the solution. The guests then answered a few questions from the live audience.
Technology Partners Tackle Opioid Issue

Last November, our president, Fred Muench, joined an online discussion of experts from the technology space, public sector and nonprofits. Titled “Searching for Answers: Innovating for Families in the Opioid Age,” the panel explored ways in which the Internet can help families who have been impacted by addiction find guidance, treatment and support.

Muench spoke about the challenges that many families face when seeking treatment for a loved one who has struggled with opioids. In response to these challenges, he highlighted various resources and customized services from our Helpline that ensure that every family receives free, personalized support.

The event was sponsored by Google, Facebook, Twitter, The Center for Safe Internet Pharmacies and the Internet Association.

Heroin(e) Netflix Documentary Film Screening

Netflix tapped the Partnership to co-host a screening of their compelling and Oscar-nominated original short documentary film, Heroin(e), at the SoHo House in New York City.

Heroin(e) chronicles the once bustling industrial town of Huntington, West Virginia that has now become the epicenter of America’s opioid epidemic – with an overdose rate 10 times the national average. But within this distressed landscape, Peabody Award-winning filmmaker Elaine McMillion Sheldon shows a different side of the opioid crisis – one of hope. The film highlights three women working to change the town’s narrative and break the devastating cycle of substance use – by helping one person at a time.

Netflix approached us to partner on this screening because of our leadership and work for families. After the screening, our president Fred Muench sat down with Elaine for an intimate Q&A session with the audience.
IGA Again Commits to Helping Families

IGA USA continued its collaboration as our valued partner through their IGA Cares initiative. Through in-store awareness of our free resources, like our Helpline, and fundraising through the sale of specially marked IGA Exclusive Brand products, the IGA Cares initiative raised both critical funds and awareness to help parents and families address the nation’s opioid epidemic during the national campaign.

IGA carried on with a number of in-store fundraising activities, including donating a portion of the sale of specially marked IGA Exclusive Brand products and in-store donations made at registers through participating stores’ pin-up promotions. They also continued to spread the word about how families can get help through the Partnership’s resources on the informational web page jnabetterchoices.com.

In turn, we offered our resources to IGA consumers through our website at drugfree.org and our Helpline, which were displayed throughout IGA stores, in the form of take-away post cards, bag stuffers and other printed materials during the campaign promotion.

Teen Abuse of Cough Medicine Remains at Historically Low Levels

For over a decade, our prevention campaign, developed in collaboration with the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) and Tribal Worldwide, has continued to drive down rates of abuse of over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicine containing dextromethorphan (DXM) by teens. In 2018, we leveraged whatisdxm.com and DXM Labworks, our award-winning gaming application, with an optimized approach and new media tactics. Engagement remained strong with teens spending an average of more than 11 minutes interacting with our messaging - a length of time that is practically unheard of for an educational game aimed at teens. We’re thrilled to report that the most recent results from Monitoring the Future, the National Institute on Drug Abuse and University of Michigan’s annual drug abuse survey, show the percentage of teens using OTC cough medicine containing DXM to get high remained at just 3 percent in 2018.

Communications Activity

Representing Family Journeys in PSAs

In 2018, two TV PSAs encouraged parents and caregivers to take action and not hesitate to reach out for help for their child who is struggling with substance use. Both spots featured real parents whose children faced an addiction to prescription opioids.

Upon discovering his son was misusing prescription pills, David stated, “I felt like a failure, as many parents do, but the problem was bigger than him. He needed help so I confronted it.” His son has been in recovery for a few years now.

Justina ultimately lost her son Ronnie when he was just 19 years old. In her PSA, she tearfully advises other parents, “Try not to be too proud to reach out for help. Don’t be worried about what your neighbor or family will think, just get the child the help they need.”

Both PSAs end with the tag line, “There’s hope and help at drugfree.org.” The PSAs aired in conjunction with the Partnership’s larger parent testimonial campaign, across both national and local TV. To view these and other Partnership TV PSAs, visit the Partnership on YouTube.

Our Supporters Donated Over $65M In Pro-Bono Media

The Partnership is grateful to our media supporters for their continued generosity. Our Medicine Abuse Project-specific PSAs were featured on television, radio, magazines and newspapers, as well as digital properties and mobile media, in 2018. These PSAs feature real stories of those who have struggled with addiction and stories of hope for families.

Television: A E CBS COX CoxMedia DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCOVERY DISCO
Collaboration with Grayken

We collaborated with The Grayken Center for Addiction at Boston Medical Center (BMC) to close a gap in desperately needed support for parents. This partnership brought new resources and offered evidence-based guidance to Massachusetts families, including help from Parent Support Specialists, either online or over the phone. These free, customized resources helped families address their child’s substance use disorder with proven strategies that increase the chances of recovery and overall better outcomes for the family.

“Young adults are among the most vulnerable populations at risk of addiction and overdose deaths in this epidemic that has touched every community in our state,” said Michael Botticelli, the executive director of BMC’s Grayken Center for Addiction and the former director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy in the Obama Administration.

“Hoping can’t help a kid struggling with drugs. But together, we can.”

We partner with parents and families to get help for kids whose drug or alcohol use threatens their lives with addiction.

We provide the science-based information parents need to understand substance use and programs to help parents effectively engage with their teens and young adults.

Our specialists will listen to parents and provide one-on-one guidance for families struggling with their son or daughter’s addiction. They will consult with other specialists and families that have successfully found this path toward recovery.

“They are here to help. Our services are free. Let’s work together. To begin getting personalized support, connect with our Parent Helpline: Call 1-844-319-5999. Text HOPEMA to 55753.”

One of the Grayken Center’s priority goals is to close the gap in support for parents, as well as in treatment and prevention for young adults. This initiative will equip parents with much-needed resources that help them work together with their children to find a path toward recovery.”

Michael Botticelli
Executive Director,
BMC’s Grayken Center for Addiction
Former Director,
Office of National Drug Control Policy

Ongoing Community Activity with DEA360

We continued our work with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) on their DEA360 initiative, which focuses resources on selected communities across the nation. In 2018, the Partnership bolstered DEA360 efforts in Salt Lake City, Utah; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; South Jersey and the Newark area in New Jersey; and Baltimore, Maryland.

DEA’s 360 Strategy responds to the heroin and prescription opioid pill crisis. The 360 Strategy takes an innovative three-pronged approach to combating heroin and misuse and abuse of opioids through: coordinated law enforcement actions, diversion control enforcement actions and community outreach through local partnerships that empower communities to take back affected neighborhoods after enforcement actions and prevent the same problems from cropping up again.

The Partnership supports this strategy by engaging media partners; training community leaders to deliver community-education presentations; and training Parent Coaches in each DEA360 city.

Many Thanks to Our Partners

Through the Medicine Abuse Project, we are working to drive down overdose deaths, support families and ensure that treatment for opioid use disorders is available, affordable and rooted in science. On behalf of the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids and the families we serve, thank you for your support, which enables us to reach and help millions of families struggling with substance use.