



**Office of Alcoholism and
Substance Abuse Services**

**Department
of Health**



Arlene González-Sánchez, M.S., L.M.S.W.
Commissioner

Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

MaryEllen Elia
Commissioner

April 2018

Dear Colleague:

Heroin and opioid use continues to grow at an alarming rate, both in New York State (NYS) and throughout the nation. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the nation “is in the midst of an unprecedented opioid epidemic.” More than 500,000 people have died from drug overdoses since 2000 — nearly 91 people a day in the United States.¹ An average of one call every 45 minutes was reported to Poison Control Centers for pediatric opioid exposures from 2000-2015.²

Addiction is a progressive disease and addressing the issue early may help prevent the progression to other harmful substances. Individuals and families who have experience with the disease of addiction note that alcohol and cannabinoids, including marijuana, are usually the first substances used, particularly by young adults under the age of 18. Heroin use is also part of a larger substance misuse problem. Recent studies have shown that the percentages of high school students in New York State who have reported using heroin or who have injected an illegal drug have more than doubled from 2005 to 2015.³

The NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), the NYS Department of Health Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement (BNE), and the NYS Education Department (NYSED) have worked collaboratively to provide you with the New York State Addiction and Substance Use Disorder Educational Resource. A featured component of this resource is the Combat Heroin and Prescription Drug Abuse Kitchen Table Tool Kit. This toolkit includes videos with first-hand stories from real New Yorkers about warning signs, denial, and hope. Young people in recovery share their struggles, including their progression to addiction, loss of friendships and the strong hold addiction had on their lives.

Education and healthcare leaders can help increase awareness by talking about underage drinking, substance use disorders, addiction, warning signs, and how to access help and give support to those in need. These materials provide helpful information and guidance on how to have those conversations. We also encourage sharing this resource with high school and middle school coaches, athletic directors and trainers, school nurses, and medical directors who interact regularly with students dealing with sports-related injuries and pain relief involving opioid prescriptions or self-treatment with opioid medications.

The resource also includes:

- presentations, videos, and discussion guides about the opioid and heroin epidemic;
- information about the risks of improperly using controlled substances and how to properly dispose of unused medications;
- details on NYS laws that allow schools to provide and maintain opioid antagonists (naloxone) on-site for students or staff experiencing symptoms of opioid overdose;
- NYSED’s training program approved by the Department for school personnel to implement an opioid overdose prevention program and how to obtain free naloxone; and

- Health Education Standards Modernization Supplemental Guidance Document: An Instructional Resource Packet for Heroin and Opioids, to help school districts meet the requirements of modernizing health education instruction by including heroin and opioid content in the curriculum.

The New York State Addiction and Substance Use Disorder Educational Resource is available free on a flash drive that may be ordered by sending an email to: B0019W@health.ny.gov (email address contains zeros), or by mailing your request to:

PUBLICATIONS
NYSDOH Distribution Center
P.O. Box 343
Guilderland, New York 12084

Materials sent to addresses within New York State are provided free of charge. Quantities may be limited.

Please include the name of your school, company, or facility; physical address; name and email address of contact person; and the following description and order number: New York State Addiction and Substance Use Disorder Educational Resource - Pub.# 12029. (Flash drives cannot be mailed to post office boxes).

Addiction can happen to anyone, to any family, and at any time. We believe by working together, everyone can help make a difference, and we urge you to join in the fight against addiction. Anyone in need of help for addiction should call the New York State HOPEline at 1-877-8-HOPENY or text: HOPENY (Short code: 467369).

Sincerely,



Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner of Health
New York State Department of Health



Arlene González-Sánchez, M.S., L.M.S.W.
Commissioner
New York State Office of Alcoholism &
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MaryEllen Elia
Commissioner of Education
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¹Center for Disease Control and Prevention, “Drug overdose deaths in the United States continue to increase in 2015,” updated December 16, 2016, <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/>

²Jakob D. Allen et al. “[Prescription Opioid Exposures Among Children and Adolescents in the United States: 2000–2015](#),” (American Academy of) *Pediatrics*, March 2017.

³Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). [2005-2015 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System Data](#). Available on the New York State Department of Health website. Accessed on April 14, 2017.

