# <https://www.hhs.gov/about/agencies/iea/partnerships/opioid-toolkit/index.html>

# Opioid Epidemic Practical Toolkit: Helping Faith and Community Leaders Bring Hope and Healing to Our Communities

In 2015 alone, more than 33,000 people in the United States died of opioid overdose, which is over 90 people each day. This toolkit, developed by the HHS Center for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, contains practical steps your organization can take to bring hope and healing to those and the millions more suffering the consequences of opioid abuse disorder.

Six Ways to Respond as a Faith Community

Open Your Doors: Host or Offer Space to Recovery Programs and Support Groups

Finding a supportive community and building strong relationships are essential to ongoing recovery. The process of recovery is supported through relationships and social networks.

Communities can offer to host programs like Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Celebrate Recovery, or other self-help support groups. These programs help those with addiction feel less alone by connecting them to others in recovery.

# Increase Awareness: Provide Educational Opportunities that Create Understanding and Encourage Compassion

Community members need to understand addiction to create a culture of acceptance and support. Once addiction is understood as a chronic disease condition, not a personal failing, stigma and shame can be replaced by compassion and hope.

# Build Community Capacity: Offer Training Programs to Build the Capacity of Communities to Respond.

90 percent of Americans struggling with addiction are not currently getting treatment. Making sure they get it can make a huge difference. —HHS Secretary Tom Price, M.D.

You can save lives by referring people to proper treatment and help navigate systems of care.

Leaders in faith and community organizations can be trained to:

* Make referrals to treatment
* Respond in an emergency
* Provide ongoing support groups for those in recovery and living with addiction

Rebuild and Restore: Support Individuals and Families in Rebuilding Their Lives

Drug addiction makes it hard to function in daily life. It affects how you act with your family, at work, and in the community. It is hard to change so many things at once and not fall back into old habits. Recovery from addiction is a lifelong effort. *—*[*NIDA, What Is Recovery?*](https://easyread.drugabuse.gov/content/what-recovery)

The lives of individuals and their families can be dramatically altered—or, too often, destroyed—by addiction. SAMHSA identifies as the [four major dimensions that support a life in recovery](https://www.samhsa.gov/recovery/peer-support-social-inclusion) as:

* **Health:** Overcoming or managing one’s disease(s) or symptoms
* **Home:** Having a stable and safe place to live
* **Purpose:** Conducting meaningful daily activities (job, family caretaking, and resources to participate in society, etc.)
* **Community:** Having relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope

# Get Ahead of the Problem: Focus Efforts on Youth and Prevention

Daily marijuana use is now at a 30-year peak level among high school seniors. 40 percent of youth have tried cigarettes by 12th grade, and alcohol remains the most widely used drug by today’s teenagers. But did you know that prescription medications are some of the most commonly misused drugs by teens, after tobacco, alcohol and marijuana?

—[Growing up Drug-Free: A Parent’s Guide to Prevention - PDF](https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/sites/getsmartaboutdrugs.com/files/publications/GrowingUpDrugFree%28Final-508%29%282017%29.pdf)

Consider targeting some of your efforts on youth to prevent the potentially devastating consequences of experimental substance use, and to help young people who may be suffering in homes where addiction is present.

Children exposed to abuse, neglect, mental illness, and substance abuse in the household may experience poorer health outcomes and fewer life opportunities. These risk factors are often called Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs. As an example, those with a history of child abuse and neglect are 150% more likely to use illicit drugs in middle adulthood.

## **Examples of Youth-focused Programs and Services**

* Offer programs on positive parenting and supporting strong family relationships
* Mentor children of parents with substance use disorders
* Support local foster children by gathering resources, donate clothing items and necessities, like cribs and car seats
* Host a faith-based recovery or support program such as [The Landing](https://www.celebraterecovery.com/index.php/about-us/19-the-landing) , [Teen Challenge USA](https://www.teenchallengeusa.com/) , or similar programs for young people

# Connect and Collaborate: Join Local Substance Use Prevention Coalitions to Inform, Connect, and Strengthen Your Efforts

Across the country, treatment professionals, law enforcement, faith communities, service providers, the courts, schools, city and health recreation centers, media, business, policymakers, families and youth leaders are coordinating their efforts to serve those struggling with addiction.