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#### Development of a Health Promotion Program: Targeting Adolescent Behaviors and Attitudes Toward Prescription Opioids

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# Development of a Health Promotion Program:

# Targeting Adolescent Behaviors and Attitudes Toward Prescription Opioids

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## BACKGROUND

Prescription pain medications (i.e., opioids or opioid analgesics) are a class of drugs made from opium and often referred to as narcotics. They include prescription analgesics such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, oxymorphone, methadone, codeine, morphine, and fentanyl.

#### **Statistics**

- ☐ The United States Department of Health and Human Services has declared prescription-opioid overdose deaths, a national epidemic.
- ☐ The United States spends over \$600 billion a year on illicit drug use.
- ☐ It is estimated that 44 people die each day from an opioid overdose across the United States.
- ☐ According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), there are "467,000 adolescents (age 12 and above) using nonmedical pain relievers" and an estimated 168,000 have developed a drug addiction to them.
- □ Prescription opioid abuse is regarded as the fastest growing type of substance abuse in the nation.
- Driving factors behind first time use of prescription opioids include peers who believe drug use is acceptable behavior, drug exposure by a family member (who is a substance user), pain relief followed by the desire to get high, social influence, and socioeconomic factors.

#### Legislation

On March 14, 2016, Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker signed a law titled, "An Act relative to Substance Use, Treatment, Education, and Prevention," which includes guidelines on first-time opioid prescription management for adults and youth, prevention education for physicians, substance abuse policy and education in schools, and voluntary school screening of substance use disorders.

This state initiative creates a comprehensive teaching approach for students to learn about the dangers of opioid prescriptions, supports responsible prescription management, and greatly impacts the level of access that adults and minors may have to opioid medications.

### Theory

The main construct of the innovative eight-week POPPY health promotion program is the **Social Cognitive Theory** which focuses on environment and health behaviors as they relate to the prevention of prescription opioid misuse. The theory involves concepts of selfefficacy, behavioral capability, reciprocal determinism, reinforcement expectations, and observational learning, all of which helped to guide curriculum development.

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

In light of this latest legislative action and review of the national and state data, it is necessary to create a model for a prescription opioid misuse prevention program. Middle school students will be considered the target audience for this program. This is the age group where youth have been identified at great risk for opioid misuse. Promote Opioid Prevention Program 4 Youth (POPPY) is designed as a middle schoolbased program initiative to address the opioid epidemic. POPPY emphasizes prevention education strategies in alignment with the Massachusetts Health Curriculum framework.

### Goals

The POPPY mission is to give every adolescent an opportunity to develop skills, adequate resources, and the education to lead a healthier life.

### **Main Goals of the POPPY Mission:**

- . Reduce adolescents' misuse of prescription opioid medication
- 2. Increase adolescents' self-efficacy to make healthy decisions regarding misuse of prescription opioid medication
- 3. Foster an environment conducive to preventing misuse of prescription opioid medication.

Evaluation of improvement in participants' perceived risk of prescription opioid misuse, confidence in their ability to deal with peers who encourage misuse of prescription opioid medication, and improvement in participants' self-perception regarding peer influences are all measured by the administration of a self-assessment at the identified intervals of eight weeks, six months and 12 months post-program participation.

# MATERIALS and METHODS

# Sample Curriculum

#### Outline Session Eight: MY PERSONAL PLAN

Objective: Participants will be able to create a plan to reduce their risks.

Materials:

Certificates of Participation Easel pad and easel Markers, different colors My Personal Plan Worksheet Pencils and/or pens

Post-Test Questionnaire Ream of paper

Welcome and Recap Session Seven (5 minutes)

Recap session seven by summarizing and highlighting the discussion regarding peer influences in decision

Exercise One: Circle of Strength (10 min)

The purpose of this exercise is to give participants the opportunity to talk about what they have and/or need to be able to refuse opioid drugs.

Each participant will receive a piece of paper to write the answer to the following question: What do you have or need to have to be able to refuse opioid drugs? Ask participants to say their answers out loud and to tape the written answer on the wall. After all participants have taped their piece of paper, give participants an opportunity to add more responses.

Process the exercise by having a discussion on what we need to stay healthy, barriers, and ways of overcoming them.

Exercise Two: My Personal Plan (15 min)

The purpose of this exercise is for each participant to develop a plan to stay healthy and away from opioid drug misuse.

Ask participants to complete My Personal Plan Worksheet. The worksheet will ask participants to identify situations that may place them at risk of misusing opioid drugs. For each situation, the participants wil identify possible solutions, consequences, and available support system.

Post-Test Questionnaire (10 min) Distribute the post-test questionnaire to each class participant.

Program Evaluations (5 min) The post-test questionnaire will be distributed to students at the identified intervals: at the end of session eight, six-months post program completion, and 12-months post program completion.

Closing: Certificates and Incentives awarded (5 min) Each participant will receive a Certification of Participation.

# Sample Worksheet

### **My Personal Plan**

This exercise will allow you to create a plan to stay healthy and away from negative influences like opioid drugs. You will identify two situations that may place you at risk of misusing opioid drugs. For each situation, identify possible solutions, consequences, and the support system that will help

influence your decisions. Think of every day scenarios that you may encounter or have already experienced. You may use an extra page for your answers.

Situation 1: Possible Solutions Possible Consequences

Who can be Supportive?

Situation 2: Possible Solutions Possible Consequences

Who can be Supportive?

Use your 'Coat of Arms' to help complete your personal plan.

Promoting Opioid Prevention Program 4 Youth

**POPPY** 

# Opioid Epidemic in Massachusetts Age-Adjusted Opioid-related Death Rate by Year Comparing the overall opioid-related death rate of Massachusetts to the nation overa

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2014 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released 2015. Massachusetts Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

# CONCLUSION

Adolescents with an opioid addiction are at high risk of overdose and death so protecting youth from health risks is critical to preventing fatalities and other major illnesses later on in life.

The POPPY health promotion program will provide age appropriate education that leads to development of health-related decision- making skills.

Ultimately healthier decisions lead to a reduction in opioid misuse risk factors such as peer pressure, social influence, curiosity, and experimentation.

Utilizing an upstream approach to protect our youth against the hazards of opioid misuse will make a sustainable impact towards positive health outcomes for the adolescent population.

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