

Taking Action

AWARENESS is often the first step in addressing a problem. What does drug misuse look like in our community? What are the statistics? Who are the community partners that are addressing the issue today? What does recovery look like? Where is it available?

EDUCATION is often the key ingredient to changing perceptions about drug misuse and recovery. How do opioids affect the brain? Why is long term recovery important? What role do medications play in recovery?

We should try to provide practical steps for our audience (perhaps a congregation?) so that meaningful **ACTIONS** can come from an emphasis on the drug misuse problem. We recommend these steps.

- Use short meaningful videos and images to promote care and concern about the opioid crisis.
- Provide NARCAN (naloxone) to your community group or church.
- Distribute Deterra Drug Deactivation pouches as a way of removing the risk provided by unused pills and liquids in homes.⁵
- Connect with the local anti-drug coalition in your community,

References and Resources

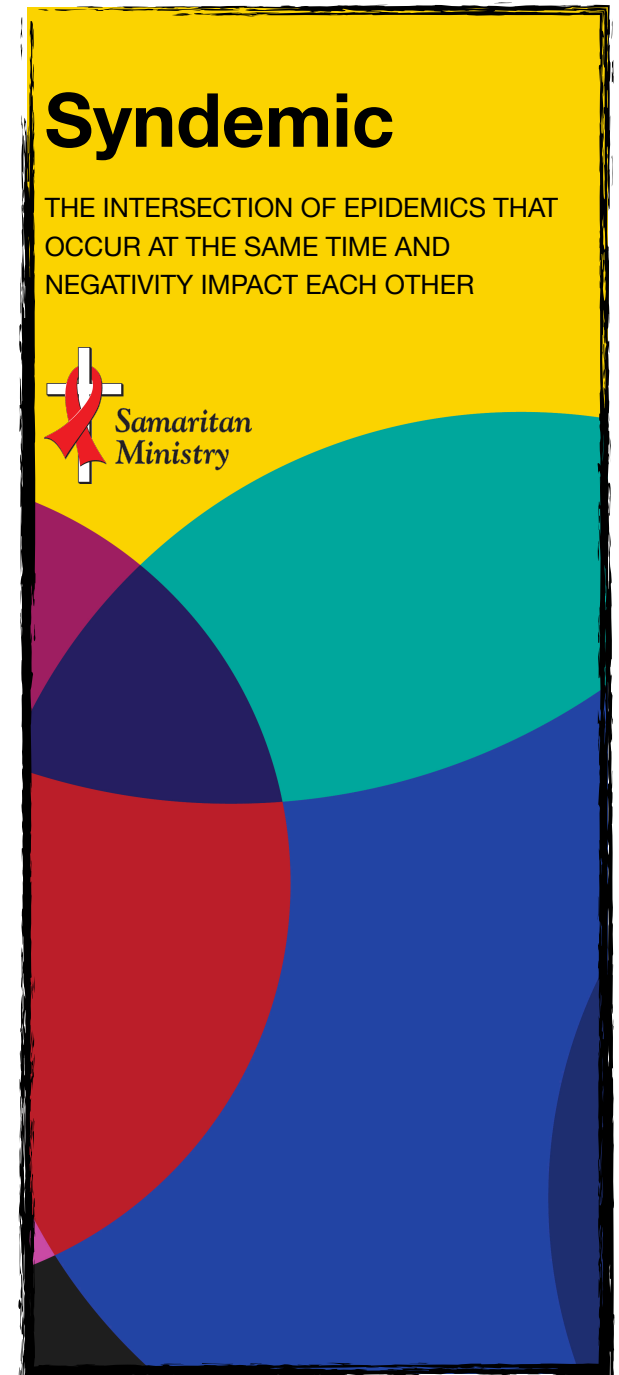
1. <https://www.cdc.gov/pwid/vulnerable-counties-data.html>
2. CDC videos @ <https://www.cdc.gov/rxawareness/resources/video.html>
3. ROPS resources in Tennessee <https://www.tn.gov/behavioral-health/substance-abuse-services/prevention/rops.html>
4. Remove the Risk, a campaign by the FDA at FDA.gov.
5. Deterra Drug Deactivation pouches available from SafeProject - <https://www.safeproject.us> or from <https://deterrasystem.com>.

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Syndemic

THE INTERSECTION OF EPIDEMICS THAT OCCUR AT THE SAME TIME AND NEGATIVELY IMPACT EACH OTHER



Vulnerability and HIV - The Syndemic

Following an outbreak of HIV in a rural Indiana county in 2015, the CDC set out to assess the vulnerability to an HIV outbreak in areas across the US. The result of their analysis was the identification of 220 counties that look to be vulnerable to HIV outbreak, largely due to co-occurring epidemics of Hepatitis C and an increase in injection drug use.¹ The term SYNDEMIC has been used to describe these intersecting health issues. Samaritan Ministry has been working to educate and to take action within the syndemic framework of HIV, Hepatitis C, and the opioid crisis.

The Opioid Crisis

The opioid crisis in the US is out of control. Overdose deaths in many communities are increasing at alarming rates. The CDC estimates that 841,000 Americans lost their lives from a drug overdose since 2019. We know that young people in all demographic/socio-economic groups are affected by this crisis.

The CDC has produced some great 30 sec. videos that are great awareness tools.²

73,600
Drug Overdose Deaths in 2019

Naloxone Can Reverse an Overdose

Naloxone (NARCAN) is a safe medication that can reverse an overdose. These simple nasal spray kits are available in your community.³

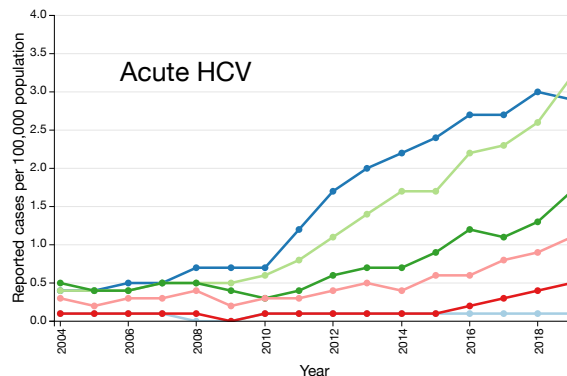
Remove the Risk⁴

You can take steps to remove unused opioids and other medications from your home. This is a great action step for every community group.

Hepatitis C

Hepatitis C (HCV) is a viral infection that causes liver inflammation and can also lead to liver failure and death. While there is no vaccine for HCV, there is a cure.

Testing and awareness about this curable disease is important. Many communities offer rapid HCV testing, referral, and access to treatments. Fueled by injection drug use, there have been dramatic increases in new (acute) cases, particularly affecting the 20-39 age group (blue and light green in graph below). Learn more at <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/>.



The Response

Our response to these converging epidemics, known as a syndemic, is to provide accurate information with a practical approach that can actually be put into place. Here are the watchwords for our approach.

A comprehensive approach recognizes science, and does not fall victim to moralistic or religious judgments that are not based on scientific evidence. Science matters.

Samaritan Ministry is busy in our community providing rapid HIV and Hepatitis C testing. We are working to support syringe exchange and distribution of Naloxone, the drug that can reverse an overdose.

Helping those who are dealing with addiction means that we FIRST recognize that addiction is not a moral failure. Addiction is a treatable disease.

Often we wonder just how many times should naloxone or recovery be made available? Jesus would tell us perhaps 70 X 7 times. Let us always put Jesus in our response.

And we must assure that the faith community is always represented at the table wherever community drug coalitions are meeting.