

Opiate Addictions: Families Are In Crisis

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As a former substance abuse treatment provider and now an Employee Assistance Program counselor with more than 20 years of experience, I have learned that it is important to acknowledge when we believe that a loved one or a person we might know has a drug problem. We must begin to understand that they have a disease, and if it is untreated it can destroy the entire family.

Drug use puts a lot of stress on parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents — anyone who is part of the home. The opioid epidemic is destroying families, leading to overdose, burdening law enforcement, the courts and health care institutions. And it is killing far too many people.

When family members take drugs:

- You cannot count on them to do what they say they will do.
- They may forget or get distracted because their focus is on getting and taking drugs.
- They may lie or steal money to buy drugs.
- They may get fired from their jobs.
- They may not come home at night.
- They may do bad things they would never do if they weren't using drugs.

Family members may fight a lot as a result of the problems the drug use is causing. The person who is using drugs may do and say things that upset neighbors and friends, and sometimes even make the family feel ashamed.

Some people who are addicted don't believe that they are sick and out of control, so they don't look for education or treatment. They don't see the problems they are causing themselves and those around them. Other people who are addicted are aware of the problem, but many family members are too upset and confused that they don't know how to ask for or get help.

How meritorious is it for not only our state but our community to be named and ranked among the worst in the nation for opioid addictions and overdose?

Alcohol and other drug (AOD) addictions play an important role in our community. Now more than ever, we need to understand and recognize the crisis at hand.

We play an important role in demolishing the infrastructure of addiction. It needs to be our priority:

The widespread availability of opioids has led to nearly 400 overdoses in Montgomery County in the last six months alone.

Hydrocodone/APAP; Oxycodone IR/ Oxycodone/APAP; morphine IR; hydromorphone; morphine LA; methadone; and fentanyl patches — these opioids are the most commonly used and distributed throughout our communities. They are often used to treat acute or chronic pain, and the longevity of their use can lead to long-term and unintended addiction.

Addiction is a very complex brain disease in which the individual becomes mentally obsessed with drugs and alcohol, despite negative consequences such as family disintegration, loss of employment, failure in school, domestic violence, and child abuse — among others. Legal ramifications and criminal justice involvement commonly occur. The impact to individuals, children, families, and entire communities is often devastating. Consequently, (Alcohol Other Drugs) AOD abuse and addiction is EVERYONE'S problem as it infringes on every niche of every community and every family member.

Scientific advances over the last 30 years have defined AOD dependence as a chronic relapsing disease with psychological and physiological characteristics. Despite this fact, many continue to believe that addiction is a personal choice and evidence of moral weakness. Stereotypes and stigmas play significant roles in

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3170 Kettering Blvd.
Building B
Dayton, OH 45439

We have satellite offices in Eaton, Springboro, Troy, Greenville, and at Miami Valley Hospital South.

8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mon. - Thurs.
8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Fri.

All counselors provide evening appointment times.

(937) 208-6626 or
(800) 628-9343
(24-hour, toll free)

Services Include:

- Voluntary, confidential assessments. Short-term counseling and referral services for employees and household members covering a wide range of issues. Services are free and number of accesses unlimited.
- Substance abuse and wellness education groups
- In-service for sexual harassment, diversity, violence in the workplace
- Workplace wellness
- 24-hour crisis phone service
- Substance abuse trainings that meet state and Bureau of Worker Compensation requirements for drug free workplaces

diminishing our community's ability to respond to this issue; thus, the consequences to individuals, families, and communities are exacerbated.

A geographic review of drug-related arrest rates, emergency room rates, and mortality rates indicate that the devastation caused by AOD abuse and addiction is evident in every segment of every urban, suburban, and rural neighborhood in our community.

Most people think only addicts can overdose on opiates or opioids. Anyone taking them can suffer an opiate or opioids overdose. An opioid overdose creates a slowing of the respiratory system; breathing, if slowed too much, creates severe respiration depression. Many overdoses lead to death because bystanders, family members, or other witnesses to the overdose do not understand the symptom process and the possibility to sustain life if Narcan is administered in time.



Here are overdose symptoms a family member might encounter:

- Respiration rate less than 12 breaths per minute
- Pinpoint pupils
- Acting confused
- Acting drowsy and having trouble staying awake
- Asking just to be allowed to go to sleep
- Sudden mood shifts from happy to sad
- Acting as if nothing matters anymore
- Moving slowly, if moving at all
- Nausea
- Not knowing where they are
- Uncontrolled vomiting

Understanding and recognizing these symptoms in family members and the risk of overdose potentially could aid in the early administration of Narcan, and possible save the life of a loved one.

Narcan is a temporary reversal agent that only affects medication derived from opioids. Education and prevention are key to improving our standing in the nation's overdose statistics.

- Linking transition services between prevention, assessment, treatment, and aftercare should exist along an unbroken continuum so that individuals do not have the opportunity to fall through the cracks.
- The ability to share the development of this newsletter is its culminating product; however, our work as EAP counselors and substance abuse professionals is just beginning.

Recovery still works, I say to those still struggling with family members who might be experiencing some opioid signs and symptoms.

If you or a family member is struggling, EmployeeCare could be the first step toward recovery. Please call EmployeeCare at **(937) 208-6626** or if outside the area, please call **1-800-628-9343**.

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