

International Overdose Day

Did you know that we are still in an opioid epidemic? Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription, such as oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, morphine, and many others (NIH).

The opioid epidemic began with an increase of prescribing these highly addictive medications in the early 1990s. The increase of these medications in society created the issues of overuse and misuse that contributed to the ongoing opioid crisis. In 2010, there was a similar influx of continual problematic opioid use. As a result of the rising opioid overdoses in the community, Fairfax County developed the Opioid Task Force in 2017. Fairfax County created the Substance Abuse Prevention Program in response to the need for prevention education in the schools in 2018. This effort placed Substance Abuse Prevention Specialists in each pyramid.

Opioid abuse is now the leading cause of unnatural death in Fairfax County according to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. It is in our community and often goes unnoticed. In 2017, over 100 deaths were attributed to opioid overdose in Fairfax County. Over 1,200 opioid overdose deaths were reported in the State of Virginia. The 2021 data from the first and second quarters indicate there has been a slight decline since the COVID-19 pandemic. How does this affect our families?

Prescriptions in the home are one of the primary ways children gain access to opioids (i.e. OxyContin), and other addictive and harmful medications, such as benzodiazepines (i.e. Xanax). You can make a beneficial impact on this issue by not saving medication for future use, properly disposing of unused medication, and not giving your prescriptions to children. You can access drug disposal boxes at designated locations throughout the county. For general questions about the FCPS Substance Abuse Prevention Program, please contact the Office of Student Safety & Wellness at: (571) 423-4270.

Resources:

- **Safe Disposal Medication Sites:** <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/drug-disposal>.
- **Truth Initiative Student Opioid Story:** <https://youtu.be/gODuvhM0BsQ>
- **Narcan Training (English & Spanish):** <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/community-services-board/heroin-opioids/revive>
- **Fairfax County Youth Substance Use Trends:** <https://youtu.be/FiqPh38dtd4>
- **Rainbow Fentanyl:** <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2022/08/30/dea-warns-brightly-colored-fentanyl-used-target-young-americans>

For further Information & support:
Michael McNulty
mpmcnulty@fcps.edu
Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist