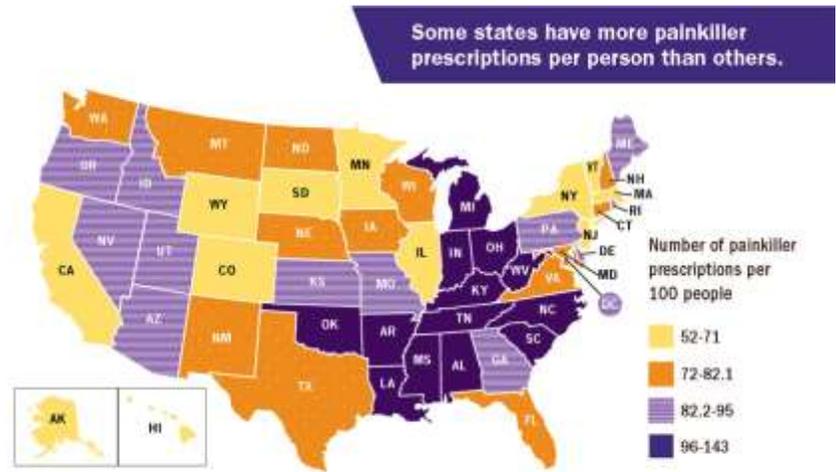


Faith Community Leaders

Opioid Prescriptions: A national comparison

Opioids, like OxyContin and Vicodin, are commonly prescribed for chronic pain. According to research from Harvard’s School of Public Health, 1 in 48 who are prescribed an opioid will use long term (Thompson 2017). Between 2002 and 2016 fatal drug overdose rates rose approximately 75 percent in North Carolina, with coastal and mountain regions demonstrating the highest overdose numbers. According to the *Charlotte Observer* (2016), almost half of drug overdoses in 2010 linked to prescriptions filled within the previous two months before death. CDC reported NC ranked 13th in written opioid prescriptions in 2012. Faith community leaders will encounter members of their congregations with opioid prescriptions. While many people use the medication properly, faith community leaders should learn to recognize the signs of opioid misuse. Early intervention saves lives.



SOURCE: IMS, National Prescription Audit (NPA), 2012

<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/opioid-prescribing/infographic.html>

Clasen-Kelly, F., & Wootsen, C. R., Jr. (2016, February 20). Doctors’ prescriptions fuel N.C. drug overdose epidemic. *Charlotte Observer*.

Thompson, D. (2017, February 15). Doctors more likely to prescribe opioids may help fuel epidemic of abuse. <http://upi.com/6495137t>



Source: Castlight

Good Samaritan Law

In North Carolina, the law protects people who ask for help from 911, the police or E.M.S because they or another person is having a drug overdose.

<http://www.naloxonesaves.org/n-c-good-samaritan-law/>

Faith Community Leaders

Recognizing warning signs

Significant changes in a loved one's typical pattern of behavior give us rise for concern. The following are potential warning signs of potential opioid misuse:

1. Physical appearance changes
2. Lying about substance use
3. Stealing to pay for habit
4. Mood swings
5. Denial
6. Trouble at work or school
7. Relationship problems
8. Thinking and memory difficulties
9. Poor hygiene (personal and home)

Overdose Deaths by Age in 2014 per 100,000 people



<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/how-bad-is-the-opioid-epidemic/>

If you recognize changes, do not be afraid to talk about your concerns with the person. Even if the person is not misusing opioids, he or she might need support for another issue.

What faith leaders can do:

- Work to decrease stigma of persons with substance use disorders.
- Join community coalitions to prevent drug overdoses.
- Promote safe prescription drug disposal sites.
- Involve families in the solution: start family support groups and provide education.
- Educate congregations on Good Samaritan and Drug Overdose Amnesty laws.
- Create a list of mental health providers, for private insurance and Medicaid.

Faith Community resources:

- SAMSHA Faith Community Initiatives
<https://www.samhsa.gov/faith-based-initiatives>
- Durham Rescue Mission: The Victory Program
<https://www.durhamrescuemission.org/programs-services/the-victory-program/>
- Faith Works Together in NC
<http://www.preventionistheanswer.org/resources/faith-community/>