## **OVERCOMING** AN EPIDEMIC

Opioids in Pennsylvania ——

# **Discussion Guide**



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## Introduction

Overcoming an Epidemic: Opioids in Pennsylvania is an interactive multimedia project designed to promote public education and awareness of the opioid epidemic, by telling the stories of families and communities working to prevent, reduce, and recover from this devastating crisis.

The ultimate project goal is an informed citizenry that can help one another, support those suffering and affected by the crisis, and intelligently assess and influence policy and practice in ways that reduce detrimental effects and improve outcomes associated with opioid use disorder.

The videos, website, and podcast episodes can act as catalysts for community discussions where people can learn about available resources, share experiences, communicate issues and needs, build lasting relationships, and plan ways to inspire and generate change.

**Note:** This guide is not designed to provide answers, but may suggest resources from which people can find answers.

### Why Hold a Discussion?

In order to promote change in your community, the majority of the public needs to fundamentally think it is the right thing to do.

Community discussions can help to bring people closer together and build understanding and empathy for those suffering directly and indirectly from the opioid crisis.

The end result of a good discussion is a set of action steps, real practices that can be adopted by your community. Once you arrive at those steps, how can you communicate to the community about them?

### Things to Consider before Holding a Discussion

There are several different kinds of discussions that can be held. Examples include hosting panels of experts, bringing in speakers or storytellers, organizing moderated discussions, and holding listening sessions.

Some attendees come for advice, information, and resources, while others come to share experiences, air concerns, and seek fellowship with compassionate listeners in a judgment-free zone.

First, determine what kind of discussion you intend to hold, then work toward collecting and organizing the necessary resources, secure a location, inform the public, and manage the event.

#### Questions to Answer

Who will moderate? What experts do you have available for a panel or to answer questions? How will you get people to attend? How long do you expect the event to last? Do you want to focus on finding answers or discussing experiences?

## **Issues and Topics**

When choosing what issues to discuss and the goals of your community discussion, the following topics may be of interest to your local audience:

#### **Prevention Options**

Watch the Prevention Episode (3:48 long)

https://opioids.wpsu.org/videos.html

Begin Discussion with Some Icebreaker Questions



This video showed some ways a community can come together to educate youth before they encounter opioids and other drugs. What are some other ways we could prevent opioid abuse?

The techniques covered in the video are designed to reduce demand. Should we also attempt to reduce supply? How about distribution?

#### Move into Community Problem-solving Efforts

Can we implement a program like PROSPER here? What would it take?

How can a community work together to reduce supply? What methods have been effective elsewhere?

How can we educate adults and assure that doctors know about the risks of opioid abuse and overprescription?

Why is it challenging to get community entities to support prevention? What is it that makes it hard for community members to get behind that, unlike treatment or harm reduction?



Watch the Recovery Episode (2:45 long)

https://opioids.wpsu.org/videos.html

Begin Discussion with Some Icebreaker Questions

What are some of the struggles that people in recovery face?

What are obstacles to implementing effective recovery techniques here?

Do you have any concerns about people in recovery being in your neighborhood, or even in your house?

Move into Community Problem-solving Efforts

What support systems can we create with local resources to help people in recovery?

How can our community pay for effective recovery systems?

#### **Reducing Stigma**

Watch the Reducing Stigma Episode (4:48 long)

https://opioids.wpsu.org/videos.html

Ask people to listen to podcast episode one - Stigma, before the event.

https://opioids.wpsu.org/podcast.html

Begin Discussion with Some Icebreaker Questions



What are your thoughts on the stigmatizing of people suffering from opioid use disorder?

Were you aware of this problem?

Do you feel like you need any more information to have an informed understanding of the stigma associated with this epidemic?

Which group most needs to hear this message? People with use disorder? The public? Doctors? First responders? Etc.

Move into Community Problem-solving Efforts

How can we change people's opinions and beliefs about this? What strategies can we implement to help spread this message?

What words and messages are most effective at changing opinions about people with opioid use disorder?



Watch the Legal Support Video Episode (3:16 long)

https://opioids.wpsu.org/videos.html

Begin Discussion with Some Icebreaker Questions

Did you see anything familiar or surprising in this video?

How does opioid use disorder affect families here? Any stories?

What do you see as societal needs in this area?

Move into Community Problem-solving Efforts

How can our community help family members and loved ones suffering from or dealing with the consequences of opioid use disorder, but who are not themselves misusing opioids?

What can we as individuals do to help?

What can we do in our own homes? (e.g. lock or hide prescription drugs)

Are there any policy shifts we can recommend to our leaders and elected reps? How do we go about doing that?

Are there similar situations from the past that have taught us how to help now?

What programs are available now and how do we access them?



#### Rural Care and Education

Watch the Rural Care and Education Video Episode (3:45 long)

https://opioids.wpsu.org/videos.html

Begin Discussion with Some Icebreaker Questions

What are the challenges presented by opioid use disorder for people living in rural areas?

Why do you think people in rural areas are so hard hit by the opioid epidemic?

Move into Community Problem-solving Efforts

How do you think rural communities could improve their response to this crisis?

What programs are available here, are they being used to their fullest effect, and how can more people in need access them?

## Media Resources Available

Main Websitehttps://opioids.wpsu.orgVideo Episodeshttps://opioids.wpsu.org/videos.htmlPodcast Episodeshttps://opioids.wpsu.org/podcast.html

## **Event Format Ideas**

#### Panel Discussions

Panel discussions may bring in medical professionals, public officials, experts from partner organizations, and community members affected by the opioid crisis.

### Public Gathering

Local civic organizations, municipalities, and recovery-focused groups may want to organize a public meeting and show a clip of one of the videos or listen to part or all of a podcast episode to generate discussion. Partners or local representatives could be present to address questions from community members.

### Local Call-in Shows

Local radio stations may want to produce call-in shows that invite the public to share their stories and opinions using the website and broadcast as jumping-off points.

#### Community Meetings

One of the video episodes can be shown as part of a special or regularly-scheduled meeting of civic organizations or concerned citizens, or at a training event of first-responder or medical professionals.

### Create Your Own Event

Be creative in organizing, marketing, and holding a unique event where you live. Perhaps develop a communal activity or public art project with which participants can help. Organize a temporary public display or vigil. These can serve as both an emotional outlet for participants and an awareness-raising effort for the public.

## **Community Partner Ideas**

You may consider finding local partners to help you create, market, and attend your event. Different groups bring a variety of perspectives, relationships, networks, expertise, and organizational assets to the table.

- Public television stations (managers, programmers, and community relations staff)
- Public radio stations
- Municipal leaders and staff
- Hospitals and medical professionals
- Recovery centers
- Police and Sheriffs' offices
- Civic groups
- City or county managers
- Elected officials
- Service organizations such as Kiwanis, Rotary, and Lions clubs
- Community or university libraries
- Fraternal organizations such as VFW, Elks, and League of Women Voters
- Nursing organizations
- Local college or university faculty, students, or clubs (Check with Nursing, Medical, Criminal Justice, Political Science, Public Policy departments, etc.)



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