FACING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC:
9 things to know.

1. **Connecticut is in an opioid crisis.** Opioid-related overdose deaths in CT have grown at 4 times the national average since 2012.

2. **Opioids dominate fatal drug overdoses.** Of the 917 drug overdose deaths in 2016, a significant number involved opioids.

3. **The issue is not just prescription medications.** Drug overdose deaths involving heroin continued to climb, with 500+ fatal overdoses in 2016.

4. **Misuse of Fentanyl.** Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid pain medication, is 50-100 times stronger than heroin. Mixing heroin and Fentanyl is causing a rapid rise in fatal overdoses.

5. **Overdoses are more common in suburbs and rural areas than urban areas.** Although cities are centers of the problem, it goes way beyond urban areas.

6. **White males are more likely to experience opioid overdose.** The epidemic affects us all. But of those who died of opioid overdose in 2016, the highest rate was among white, non-Hispanic males.

7. **Most people who have problems with opioids are top income earners.** Statistics show 66% of people with a nonfatal opioid overdose have incomes in the top half of their communities.

8. **Early intervention can reduce overdose deaths.** Naloxone (Narcan) is effective in stopping opioid-related overdoses.

9. **It’s a crisis that can be solved.** MAT (medication assisted therapy), for example, is just one form of treatment that can help people facing opioid addiction.

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**CHANGE THE SCRIPT AND CHANGE LIFE FOR THE BETTER.**

We need to agree that it’s time to change the way we view illicit and prescription drug misuse and how we deal with it.

- **Talk to your doctor.** Have a conversation about prescription opioids.
- **Get informed.** Go online and learn what you can do to prevent opioid misuse in your community.
- **Go to drugfreect.org** for prevention, treatment, and recovery resources.

**For addiction treatment 24/7 call the Access Line**
1-800-563-4086
(this includes detox and treatment for prescription opioids or heroin addiction)

To order this and other resources contact
Connecticut Clearinghouse
www.ctclearinghouse.org
1-800-232-4424
It’s time to stop the cycle of drug misuse and addiction.

**LET’S CHANGE THE SCRIPT.**

We all know that drugs such as opioids are destroying people’s lives.

*Change the Script* aims to connect people who are affected by the crisis. Healthcare professionals. Treatment professionals. Friends and family. The public. By providing resources, *Change the Script* will help rewrite the story about how we deal with this issue.

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**PREVENTION**

You can stop opioid misuse and addiction before it starts.

The best way to treat opioid misuse is to prevent it from starting.

- Ask about **non-opioid approaches** to pain relief.
- **Never** change your dosage or stop medication without talking to your health care provider first.
- **Know the hazards of drug interactions**, including alcohol. A pharmacist can help if you have questions.
- **Never** use another patient’s prescription.
- Keep all prescription drugs — including opioids — **safely and securely stored**. More than 50% of opioid misuse starts with excess pills being used by others who have access to them.
- **Safely dispose of prescription drugs** – locate the nearest public drop box or learn how to dispose of prescription drugs at home by going to drugfreect.org

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**TREATMENT**

Effective methods are available.

- **Medication Assisted Treatment** combines medication with counseling for a “whole patient” approach.
- **Extended-release medications** stop the need for daily dosing and improve treatment.
- “Pain” can be emotional. Or it can be a sign of a mental health condition. Many people who misuse opioids suffer from depression or other mental health problems that can be treated.
- **Medication Tapering involves working with your doctor.** The goal is to decrease your dosage over a period of time.

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**RECOVERY**

Get the support you need.

- **Join with others who are facing the same situation.** 12-step programs such as Narcotics Anonymous can help.
- **Build a support system.** Ask for help from people you can trust.
- **Avoid high-risk situations.** Avoid people you know who misuse opioids and other drugs. Set boundaries around your recovery and enforce them.
- Have strategies for avoiding a return to use. Know the signs. Have someone to call. Know how to distract yourself for 15-30 minutes. Learn how to relax. Do your recovery in small chunks of time. Access resources online.
- **Learn about CT’s recovery system at drugfreect.org.** Find links to treatment centers as well as recovery resources such as CCAR – the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery.

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**3 KEY FACTS ABOUT OPIOIDS.**

1. **Knowledge is power.** The more you know about opioids, the better. Because you can do more for anyone who is struggling with them.
2. **People in crisis need support.** People addicted to opioids have a serious medical condition that requires understanding.
3. **Opioid misuse is a medical condition that requires medical solutions.** Talk to your doctor openly and honestly. He or she can help – with different approaches to managing pain, treatment options, and medical planning.