

# Substance Use Disorders and Overdose: The Basics

[www.OverdoseFreePA.pitt.edu](http://www.OverdoseFreePA.pitt.edu)  
*Public Curricula -  
Essential Knowledge for Families and Communities  
Core Component 1*

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**OverdoseFreePA**

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**The Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP)**

**The Single County Authorities (SCAs) of:**

**Allegheny County  
Blair County  
Bucks County  
Butler County  
Dauphin County  
Delaware County  
Westmoreland County**

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# What is Substance Use Disorder (SUD)?

**SUD is a broad term that includes abuse of and dependence on drugs and alcohol.**

# SUDs

- **In the U.S., an estimated 22.2 million persons aged 12 or older were classified with substance dependence or abuse in 2012.**
- **This represents 8.5 % of the population.**

# SUDs (cont'd)

- Of these individuals:
  - 2.8 million had dependence or abuse of both alcohol and illicit drugs.
  - 4.5 million had dependence or abuse of illicit drugs but not alcohol.
  - 14.9 million had dependence or abuse of alcohol but not illicit drugs.

# **Addiction is a Brain Disease, and it Matters**

**Addiction is a complex brain disease characterized by compulsive, at times uncontrollable, drug craving, seeking, and use that persist despite potentially devastating consequences.**

# Addiction is a Brain Disease, and it Matters (cont'd)

- Addiction is medically recognized as a disease.
- NOT a personal weakness.



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# **Addiction is a Brain Disease, and it Matters (cont'd)**

- **The initial choice to take drugs is voluntary, but a person's ability to exert self control can become impaired when SUD takes over.**
- **SUDs are accompanied by social stigma and shame, but SUD is actually a brain disease.**

# **Co-Occurring Disorders**

**Mental health disorders and SUD often co-occur.**

**In other words, individuals with SUD often have a mental health condition at the same time and vice versa.**

# Co-Occurring Disorders (cont'd)

- **Co-occurring disorders can further complicate the lives of individuals with SUDs.**
- **Approximately 8.9 million adults are diagnosed with co-occurring disorders.**
- **Only 7.4% of people receive treatment for both conditions.**
- **55.8 % of do not receive any treatment.**

# **There are Many Pathways to Recovery**

- Each person's recovery needs are different.**
- People have different strengths, goals, preferences, culture and backgrounds.**
- These things affect a person's pathway to recovery.**

# Recovery = Hope

People with SUDs and their families must maintain the hope that recovery is possible.



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# Substance Use is Harmful

- Substance use can have negative effects on a person's health and wellbeing.
- Serious health problems can develop.
- SUD most commonly begins in adolescence.
- Immediate risks to a person's health from SUD include overdose.

# Overdose

- **An overdose means having too much of a drug or alcohol, or a mix of drugs and/or alcohol for your body to safely handle.**
- **Overdose can result in permanent brain damage, permanent organ damage or death.**
- **Overdose symptoms can look different depending what kinds of drugs were used.**

# Overdose (cont'd)

- **Drug overdose was the leading cause of injury death in the U.S. in 2010.**
- **Among people 25 to 64 years old, drug overdose caused more deaths than motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2010.**

# What is an Opioid?

- Opioids are typically prescribed to help manage pain.
- Vicodin, Codeine, OxyContin, Percocet, Opana, Methadone, and Fentanyl are examples of these medications.
- Some illicit drugs, like heroin, are also opioids.

# The Prescription Opioid Epidemic

- **Deaths due to prescription opioid use have more than tripled in the past ten years across the U.S.**
- **Prescription opioids have been linked to a significant increase in overdose deaths in Pennsylvania.**

# The Epidemic in Pennsylvania

- **Pennsylvania ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the most opioid deaths per year.**
- **In the past year, prescription painkiller deaths have tripled.**

# Recovery Involves Individual, Family and Community Strengths and Responsibility



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# Overdose is Preventable



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**The best strategy  
for preventing  
overdose is to  
address SUD or  
pain management  
issues  
appropriately  
before they lead  
to overdose.**