**WHAT CAN WE DO TO PREVENT Rx DRUG ABUSE?**

There are specific strategies to decrease the likelihood of Rx drug abuse:

**Talk, Talk, Talk!** Children & teens whose parents/caregivers talk with them early and often about the dangers of drugs and alcohol use are less likely to use them—by as much as 50%! **Keep talking — they ARE listening!**

**Set clear rules.** Make sure your teen knows that s/he should always take medications as prescribed and NEVER share with others. It’s unsafe AND illegal!

**Monitor and secure.** Take charge of your own prescriptions and ask family members/friends to do the same.

**Understand.** If you/a loved one is prescribed an Rx opioid, talk with the doctor to understand: what the Rx is for; when, how, and for how long it should be taken; risks/side effects; and monitor the dispensing. Rx drug abuse can start with the use of legitimately prescribed drugs.

**Safe Disposal.** Dispose of unused/unwanted drugs & over the counter (OTC) medications in drug disposal boxes at the tri-town police stations.

Learn more, find support. Contact TTC at (978) 887-6512 or tritowncouncil.org. Click on the COALITION TAB to access opiate information.

**Rx DRUG ABUSE: GET THE FACTS**

Drug dependency and overdose death rates reaching epidemic proportions in Essex County and thousands more at risk

Sources: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA); National Institutes of Health (NIH); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Centers for Disease Control (CDC); Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM); Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA); Masco YRBS, 2014.
PRESCRIPTION (Rx) DRUGS:

What are the risks?

Some Rx drugs such as opioids/opiates, depressants and stimulants may lead to adverse health effects including addiction. These drugs, when prescribed and monitored by a medical professional and used responsibly, are relatively safe and effective. But risk of dependence and addiction exists; the US is in the midst of a prescription opioid overdose epidemic.

The risks increase significantly if medications are abused—meaning they are taken for reasons and in doses not approved by a doctor, or taken by persons other than the prescribed. Rx drug abuse can lead to other illicit drug use. 4 out of 5 heroin users started out by abusing opioids.

IS THERE AN Rx DRUG ABUSE PROBLEM?

Yes. Here’s why.

- Essex County had 2nd highest number of heroin and opioid overdose deaths in Massachusetts in 2014 (MA DPH) - almost quadrupling since 2010.
- Nationally, Rx overdose death rates have climbed 303% since 2001. (MMA)
- Drug overdoses were leading cause of accidental death in US in 2014, surpassing motor vehicle accidents. (ASAM; MMA)
- Fatal heroin overdoses have increased 321% since 2001. (MMA)
- With exception of youth ages 12—17, heroin use increased across all demographic groups since 2002. (CDC, 2015)
- Opioid prescriptions have nearly tripled from 1991-2013. 259 million prescriptions were written for opioids in 2012 —enough for every American to have his/her own bottle of pills. (NIDA, 2014; ASAM)

WHO IS AT RISK?:

Rx drug misuse/abuse affects people from various backgrounds, but some population groups are more vulnerable than others:

- **Young adults** (age 18-25): Have highest rates of Rx drug abuse. (NIDA)
- **Adolescents** (age 12-17): Are more likely to misuse Rx drugs than adults (age 26 and older). Young women in this age group misuse Rx drugs at higher rates than young men. (NIDA; SAMSHA)
- **Older adults** (age 50+): Rx drug misuse and abuse is increasing in older adults as of 2014. (NIDA)

A new report released by the CDC and FDA finds heroin use is on the rise among both men and women across all age groups and income levels. Most striking was the increase of use among populations who previously had low use rates—women, the privately insured, and people with higher incomes.

WHAT ABOUT OUR YOUTH?

- **MOST** Masco youth (over 95%) are NOT abusing Rx drugs or illicit drugs (including heroin, meth, cocaine). (Masco YRBS 2014)

BUT

- 2013 survey by Partnership for Drug Free Kids finds that 1 in 4 teens has misused Rx drugs in their lifetime—a 33% increase over 2008.
- Recent NYU study found that of high school seniors using heroin, 75% started out misusing Rx opioids.
- After alcohol and marijuana, Rx and over-the-counter drugs are most commonly abused substances among youth 14 and older. (NIDA)

### OPiates & Opioids

Opioids and opiate are often used interchangeably.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPIATES</th>
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<td>Drugs derived from opium poppy plants.</td>
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**Common Opioids/Opiates**

- Vicodin
- Percocet
- Fentanyl
- Oxycontin
- Morphine
- Demerol
- Codeine

The illegal drug Heroin is in the opioid drug class.

### depressants

Definition: Drugs that slow down activity in the brain and spinal cord.

Purpose: To relieve stress, anxiety and treat sleep disorders.

**Common Depressants**

- Valium
- Xanax
- Nembutal
- Ambien
- Klonopin

### Stimulants (Amphetamines)

Definition: Drugs that increase activity in the brain/body boosting energy, alertness and attention; raise heart and breathing rate and blood pressure.

Purpose: To treat ADHD, narcolepsy, and some forms of depression.

**Common Stimulants**

- Ritalin
- Adderall
- Concerta

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