



# The SCORE Report

“What is to give light must endure burning.”

Viktor Frankl

Volume 2, Issue 6  
Aug-Sept 2020

## “Surry, The Road to Recovery”

Surry County Opioid Response announces a new video series entitled “Surry, The Road to Recovery”. Episode One, of the four episode series, focuses on recovery. The follow-on videos will cover treatment, intervention and prevention for Substance Use Disorder (SUD). Each episode will be connected through personal stories told by County residents and provide guidance from local professionals on what is being done in Surry County. Access Episode One through the following links:

<https://vimeo.com/455059549>

Opioid Response website: [www.surrycountycares.com](http://www.surrycountycares.com)

Opioid Response Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/surrycountycares](http://www.facebook.com/surrycountycares)

A new video will be released approximately every three weeks. Use the videos for instruction and group discussion. Opioid Response will provide an Instructional Guide upon request, which will also be available at [www.surrycountycares.com](http://www.surrycountycares.com).

### EDUCATION & PREVENTION

#### Why is COVID-19 a Special Concern for People who have an Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)?

Opioids negatively impact lung and heart health. People who use opioids at high doses may be more susceptible to COVID-19 and the illness may be more severe. People who have an OUD also face separate challenges to their respiratory health. Opioids act in the brainstem to slow breathing, which not only puts the user at risk of life-threatening or fatal overdose, it may also cause a harmful decrease in oxygen in the blood (hypoxemia). While brain cells can function for short periods of low oxygen, longer periods with low or no oxygen can be especially damaging to the brain. Chronic respiratory disease can increase deadly overdose risk among people taking opioids, and diminished lung capacity from COVID-19 could similarly endanger this group.

If you have a Substance Use Disorder (SUD) stay as safe as possible from contracting COVID-19 by following the CDC's COVID-19 guidance; Call your doctor if you experience any COVID-19 symptoms, individuals with SUD may be at a higher risk for serious effects; If you are in treatment for SUD, contact your provider to learn about the best ways to continue your care during this time; and lastly, it is normal to experience stress during this time, but stress can lead to an increase in substance use so be sure to find effective coping strategies to alleviate anxiety, fear and difficult emotions. (National Institute on Drug Abuse, COVID-19 Resources)

#### ¿Por qué el COVID-19 es una preocupación especialmente para personas que tienen un trastorno por consumo de opioides?

Debido a que los opioides tienen un impacto negativo en la salud de los pulmones y el corazón, las personas que usan opioides en dosis altas pueden ser más susceptibles al COVID-19 y las enfermedades puede ser más grave. Las personas que tienen un trastorno por consumo de opioides también enfrentan desafíos de salud respiratorios. Los opioides actúan en el tronco del encéfalo para ralentizar la respiración, lo que no solo pone al usuario en riesgo de sufrir una sobredosis mortal, sino que también puede provocar una disminución dañina del oxígeno en la sangre (hipoxemia). Si bien las células cerebrales pueden funcionar durante períodos cortos de oxígeno bajo, períodos más largos con oxígeno bajo o sin oxígeno pueden ser especialmente dañinos para el cerebro. La enfermedad respiratoria crónica puede aumentar el riesgo de sobredosis mortal entre las personas que toman opioides, y la capacidad pulmonar disminuida por COVID-19 podría poner en peligro de manera similar a este grupo.

Si tiene un trastorno por uso de sustancias, manténgase lo más seguro posible de contraer COVID-19 siguiendo las pautas de COVID-19 del CDC; Llame a su médico si tiene algún síntoma de COVID-19, las personas con trastornos de consumo de opioides pueden tener un mayor riesgo de sufrir efectos graves; Si está en tratamiento, comuníquese con su proveedor para conocer las mejores formas de continuar su atención durante este tiempo; y por último, es normal experimentar estrés durante este tiempo, pero el estrés puede llevar a un aumento en el uso de sustancias, así que asegúrese de encontrar estrategias de afrontamiento efectivas para aliviar la ansiedad, el miedo y las emociones difíciles. (National Institute on Drug Abuse, recursos de COVID-19)

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## SURRY COUNTY INTERVENTION TEAM

The Intervention Team is a Surry County asset that connects individuals affected with Substance Use Disorder to treatment and the resources needed to build a path towards recovery. The Team will provide ongoing support up to and including the completion of treatment.

Anyone can call at anytime: **336-899-1585**

Connection to treatment Reduce future addiction related crisis events Overdose prevention education

Access to Peer Support Resource information

No cost service

### **COVID-19 Pandemic Collides with Substance Abuse Epidemic - The Perfect Storm**

*Question:* Why am I continuously reading about increasing illicit drug overdoses during the COVID-19 pandemic and what can be done to prevent this?

-Jeremy R.

Substance abuse is an increasing and detrimental problem in the U.S. Currently, there is an estimated number of over 20 million U.S. residents who struggle with this condition on a regular basis. Even though this number is staggering, it is increasing and has been found to be directly linked to enduring conditions experienced due to the novel COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, researchers at the CDC (2020) have found that there has been over a 13.3% increase in first time drug use in young adults, above the age of 18 years old. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) (2020), there are many risk factors that have presented themselves during the COVID-19 pandemic that can increase the chance of relapse, increase the current use, or start new use of alcohol and/or illicit substances. Anxiety, grief, social isolation, loss of employment and financial distress, and a looming sense of uncertainty about the future can certainly be an intimidation for those with a substance use disorder, as well as an alluring invitation for those at risk of developing one. Remember, addiction is a disease of social isolation.

Let's face it, we are all under an enormous amount of stress with the COVID-19 regulations and disruptions to our daily lives. However, there are many things we can do to better manage our stress levels and mental health during this time. Recommendations from the CDC (2020), include considering healthier options for coping with stress such as exercise, meditation, or reaching out to stay in touch with friends and family. If you find yourself, or a loved one, having issues with substance abuse, there are still many appropriate actions that can be implemented during this pandemic. Some of these include contacting your local Surry County Intervention Team at (336)899-1585, Partners Behavioral Health Helpline at 888-235-HOPE, or other treatment providers listed on the website [surrycountycares.com](http://surrycountycares.com).

An important and meaningful tactic is keeping regular communication with loved ones, especially if there is a suspicion of substance use. Doing this can help to monitor their substance use and mental health status. This could be a lifesaving buoy to someone who is drowning. Help is only a phone call away. Great question Jeremy, thank you!

#### **References**

- Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) (2020, July 27). *COVID-19 and the opioid crisis: When a pandemic and an epidemic collide*.  
<https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/covid-19-and-opioid-crisis-when-pandemic-and-epidemic-collide>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2020, June 12). *Alcohol and Substance Use. Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)*.  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/stress-coping/alcohol-use.html>

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