

## Drug and Alcohol Awareness

### How to Talk to Someone You Suspect

The United States is in the midst of an opioid **overdose** epidemic. Since 2000, the rate of deaths from drug overdoses has increased 137%, including a 200% increase in the rate of overdose deaths involving opioids (opioid pain relievers and heroin). Excessive alcohol use leads to about 88,000 deaths in the United States each year, and shortens the life of those who die by almost 30 years. Drugs and alcohol can affect anyone, regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, social and income status, or lifestyle

What do you do if you believe that a family member, loved one or close friend is using drugs or drinking an excessive amount? Talking openly with your loved ones has the power to remove the fear and shame surrounding addiction, and ultimately save lives. Always show them you care about their potential problem.

When it is time to approach your friend or loved one, consider these tips:

- Think about what you want to say and how you want to say it ahead of time.
- Pick the right time and place, preferably a quiet, private setting when the person is not under the influence.
- Consider a professionally assisted intervention. In this action, a therapist helps you and other concerned family members, friends or co-workers put together a united front to gently confront the substance abuser and help him or her enter rehabilitation. Intervention by a group can thwart the alcoholic's or addict's tendency to rationalize his or her behavior or blame you.
- Adopt the voice of a caring friend, not a judgmental or preachy lecturer. Speak calmly and clearly.
- Express your beliefs and observations that you suspect the person is using drugs.
- Demonstrate your concern. Stress that you care about the person's safety and well-being.
- Offer to help the person enter rehabilitation. If it is your child, insist on getting help together as a family. If it is a relative or friend, offer to accompany the person to counseling and treatment sessions, and pledge your support through the recovery process.
- Do not expect your talk to go smoothly. The person may deny that he or she is using drugs, resent your suspicions and react angrily.
- Remember that it is not your job to change the person. The drug abuser must want to change and be willing to seek treatment. Keep in mind, however, that it is your responsibility to get help if your child is abusing drugs.