What Do I Need to Know?

“Addiction is a chronic brain disease that causes people to lose their ability to resist a craving, despite negative physical, personal, or social consequences.”* Before the onset of addiction or dependence, using drugs and alcohol produce a pleasurable feeling by activating the brain’s reward center. With repeated use, the structure of the brain gets altered to require substances to feel normal. Some will be more likely to control their drug use or stop using altogether if they receive treatment, although multiple rounds may be needed. Many will recover from addiction on their own, but may cause harm or heartache to themselves and those around them before they do. Neuroscience conducts research to identify key factors like emotional, mental, environmental, cultural, and physical vulnerabilities which may lead to drug and alcohol dependence.

There are some who believe that opioid addiction and overdose is as much a spiritual problem as a physical one. There has been great success in recent years by bringing together local educators, professionals, government leaders, and community organizers to help fight the most immediate and pressing causes of physical opioid addiction and accidental overdose. However, it is important to see the same success by bringing together different faith communities to address the underlying spiritual and emotional causes that are directly related to addiction and overdose. Anyone who has suffered from any form of addiction knows that it can be a frightening, dark, and lonely experience.

Addiction almost always alienates a person from their friends, family, and loved ones; cutting themselves off from the very people they need the most and, thus, causing their addiction and likelihood of overdose to increase. The feelings of grief, anger, regret, and guilt can weigh heavily on the hearts and minds of family, friends, co-workers, and anyone else who is in a relationship with those suffering from the side effects or death due to misuse/abuse of prescription medications. The emotional and spiritual effects of addictions, overdose, and death are far reaching, traumatizing experiences for families and communities.

Why Am I Needed?

Project Lazarus understands that the faith community is vital in the prevention and healing of opioid addiction and needs pastors and faith leaders as partners to help develop, organize, and/or offer spiritual guidance and support to not only those struggling with opioid addiction, but also to the friends, families, and loved ones suffering from the emotional and spiritual effects.

While Project Lazarus has made great gains in answering the questions of how this happens and how it can be prevented, there is still a need for faith communities to offer love, support, and guidance to those who are asking the questions of “why?” Although different faiths and denominations may answer these questions differently, Project Lazarus believes that what is most important is not necessarily the right answers, but the presence of those offering love and support, which can make all the difference in the world.
What Needs To Be Done?

Social and religious stigmas are often times placed on those struggling with opioid addiction, and addictions in general. It is important to remove all stigmas from opioid addictions and other addictions, in order to move forward.

Hold support meetings and anonymous groups for those suffering from the emotional pains of addiction.

1. Overdose Survivors
2. Families/Friends Affected by Overdose Death
3. Addiction
4. Life Skills
5. Adolescents
6. Parent/Family Empowerment

Share important safety messages regarding the importance of storing medications securely in a lock box, as well as disposing of medications properly.

Network with other members of faith community for outreach and education regarding prescription drug misuse/abuse/diversion/overdose.

Network with local behavioral health and addiction treatment providers as studies have shown pastors to be first line of referral by those seeking assistance.

Take Correctly, Store Securely, Dispose Properly, Never Share.™

Resources