



Engaging Affected Families and Friends

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The damage done by the opioid crisis cannot be told by statistics alone. Each person struggling with opioid use has their own story to tell. So do the families and friends of people who suffer from opioid use disorders. Individuals who share their stories can show the human side of the crisis and help people learning about the opioid epidemic gain a deeper understanding of the pain and suffering it has caused and the complex set of issues that has led to this public health crisis.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide information you can use to connect your efforts with the families and friends of people with opioid use disorders so they can become effective advocates by sharing their stories. The human element cannot be lost amid the statistics or the discussion of the opioid crisis and strategies for overcoming it. Use this chapter if you are:

- Looking to establish connections with the family members and friends of people with opioid use disorders;
- Trying to find powerful communicators who can speak at presentations and community events;
- Seeking people who might be willing to speak with the media or legislators;
- In need of advocates who can put a human face on the crisis;
- Looking for presentations or videos you can use for public events; and/or
- Trying to help an affected family member or friend learn how to become an effective advocate.

Everyone experiences grief differently, and for many the loss of a friend or family member can be traumatic. It is important to consider that those who have lost someone may need weeks, months, or years to cope with the loss before they are ready to speak. It is prudent to wait for these community members to let you know they are ready to tell their story.

If you have been contacted by someone who would like to become an advocate, you can help by referring them to the Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention's Affected Families and Friends Work Group. While not a support group, members of the work group are sensitive to the needs of those who have family members or friends with opioid use disorder. Some of the work group's members have personal experience with the opioid epidemic, including losing loved ones to overdose. The work group can support people interested in sharing their stories with speaker training and tips for reaching out to media and elected officials. You can contact the work group by emailing pm@corxconsortium.org.

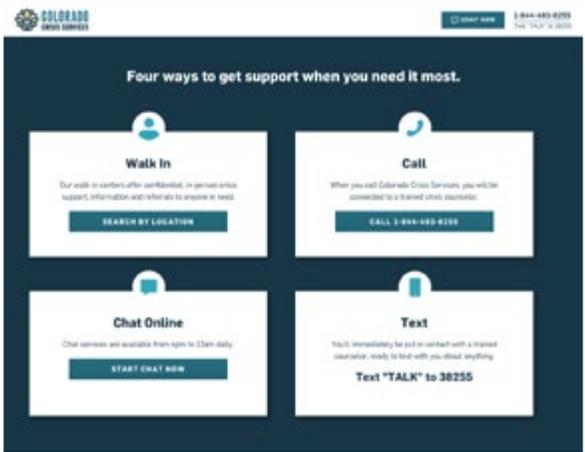
Resources

The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention's Affected Families and Friends Work Group has identified and developed resources you could use to enhance your campaigns or events.

Colorado Crisis Services



The logo for Colorado Crisis Services features a stylized green and yellow flower icon to the left of the text "COLORADO CRISIS SERVICES" in a bold, teal, sans-serif font.



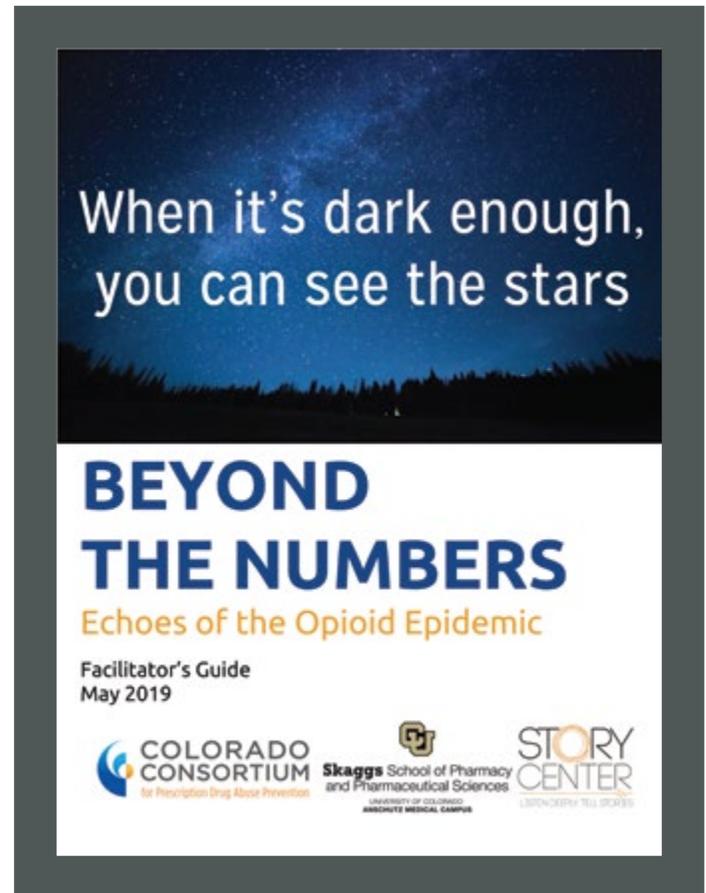
The screenshot shows the website's main navigation area with the heading "Four ways to get support when you need it most." Below this are four white boxes on a dark blue background, each with an icon and a button:

- Walk In:** "Our walk-in centers offer confidential, in-person crisis support, information and referrals to anyone in need." Button: "SEARCH BY LOCATION"
- Call:** "When you call Colorado Crisis Services, you will be connected to a trained crisis counselor." Button: "CALL 1-844-489-4138"
- Chat Online:** "Chat services are available from 9am to 11pm daily." Button: "START CHAT NOW"
- Text:** "You'll immediately be put in contact with a trained counselor, ready to talk with you about anything." Button: "Text 'TALK' to 38235"

Colorado Crisis Services offers information and emergency support online at coloradocrisisservices.org.

The parents, siblings, partners, children, and friends of people with opioid use disorders can be affected in profound ways. If you are the loved one or friend of someone with the disorder, or you are trying to help someone who is, you can find helpful resources through Colorado Crisis Services. Its website is coloradocrisisservices.org.

Beyond the Numbers: Echoes of the Opioid Epidemic



This series of short videos tells the stories of 10 people touched by the opioid epidemic and how their lives have been filled with love, loss, and hope. Each story was created and narrated by an individual directly impacted by the opioid epidemic, using their photos, videos, and voices to help viewers understand the personal impact of the crisis.

The videos are a resource community partners, agencies, and coalitions can use during events or presentations instead of (or in addition to) in-person presenters. The Consortium has developed a Facilitator's Guide that gives context to the stories and can be used to help plan events. More information can be found at www.corxconsortium.org/beyond-the-numbers.

These Numbers Have Names Presentation

The numbers showing the extent of the opioid crisis often seem overwhelming, and it is easy to forget that each statistic represents someone's mother, father, sister, brother, son, or daughter. This program, from the JP Opioid Interaction Awareness Alliance, puts faces on the statistics. People who have lost loved ones or are recovering from an opioid addiction tell their stories to help put a stop to the senseless deaths. The JP Opioid Interaction Awareness Alliance can be reached by contacting Suzi Stolte at info@jpopioidalliance.org.

JP Opioid Interaction Awareness Alliance

The Colorado-based JP Opioid Interaction Awareness Alliance was formed to educate the public about the dangers of drug interactions involving opioids. The alliance was formed by the parents of a young man who died because of a prescription drug interaction involving opioids and benzodiazepines. The organization's mission is to make people aware that combining medications can have lethal consequences. Its website is www.jpopioidalliance.org.

Center on Addiction/Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

The Center on Addiction has merged with the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids and launched a digital health technology to support parents seeking help for their child's substance use. Offering a telephone help line (not intended as a crisis line), parent coaching, and "Help and Hope by Text" messaging, parents can have access to a wealth of resources and support that have previously been difficult to find. Visit www.drugfree.org for more information about the help line and parent coaching. Text messaging support can be accessed via the website or by texting JOIN to 55753.

The Consortium's Affected Families and Friends Work Group

The Consortium's Affected Families and Friends Work Group provides those affected by prescription drug misuse and abuse an opportunity to increase awareness of this issue in their communities and throughout the state. The work group acts as a liaison for family members and friends who want to get involved with the Consortium or are seeking ways to take action. Many work group members have personal experience with family members or friends who have opioid use disorders.

The efforts of the work group continue to evolve. The work group develops resources that help individuals tell their stories about how the prescription drug abuse crisis has affected them and can help host share-and-learn events. It also can provide resources such as speaker training and talking points. In addition to developing new and up-to-date resources, it is continuously reaching out to affected families and friends to offer assistance with presentations, media engagement, and other outreach.

If you have an interest in this area or have questions about this topic, we invite you to reach out to the program manager at pm@corxconsortium.org. If you would like to join or get more information about the work group, please visit www.corxconsortium.org/affected-families-friends. You can also join by emailing info@corxconsortium.org.

Affected Families and Friends Work Group Co-Chairs

Karen Hill, JP Opioid Interaction Awareness Alliance

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