

References

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The Georgia Rx Drug Abuse Prevention Initiative

focuses on four priority areas: education, advocacy, safe storage and secure disposal to prevent and reduce prescription drug and opioid abuse, misuse, dependency and overdose in Georgia. The success of the Initiative depends on collaborating with over 225 private and public sector partners around the state in all four areas.

The Georgia Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Collaborative

is the major vehicle for such collaboration. This Collaborative is a partnership of private and public agencies, employers, and individuals engaging in best practices and policies regarding prescription drug abuse, misuse and overdose prevention.

For more information go to:
www.StopRxAbuseinGA.org

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Root Causes of the Opioid Epidemic



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What are Opioids?

Opioids are a group of drugs that affect the body and the mind, which is one reason they are so addictive. They work by affecting certain parts of the brain called “opioid receptors.”

Some opioids are **illegal** (like heroin) and some are **legally** prescribed for pain relief (like Vicodin). Many people who become addicted to legal opioids start using illegal drugs like heroin because they can no longer get or afford prescription drugs.

Some opioids like fentanyl can be prescribed by a doctor or bought illegally on the street.¹



Picture of Illegal Fentanyl

In 2017 opioids were involved in 47,600 overdose deaths (130 per day) and involved in 67.8% of all drug overdose deaths.^{2,3}

In 2018 there were 876 overdose deaths in Georgia that involved opioids. 71% of those deaths were caused by fentanyl (36%) and heroin (35%). Overdose deaths were both on purpose (suicides) and accidental.

More persons aged 35-44 died from opioid overdoses than people of other ages.⁴

Treatment and helping people recover from addiction are very important because they deal with the **effects** of the Opioid Epidemic such loss of family, job, and possibly loss of life.

But we also need to deal with what’s **causing** the epidemic in the first place by using an “upstream” prevention approach.⁵

If we see bodies floating downstream, we need to travel “upstream” to find out what is causing this to happen.



Since there are many reasons causing people to abuse opioids and “fall into the stream of addiction,” we need to look at a number of root causes.

By answering the question, “Why are so many Americans hurting so much?” we begin to get to some root causes of the Opioid Epidemic.

Since opioids can help take away the pain in our minds (for a while) as well as pain in our bodies, many persons take opioids to avoid unpleasant feelings like fear and depression or physical pain.

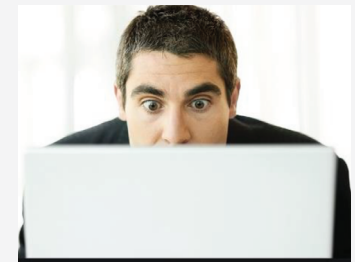
For some solutions to the Opioid Epidemic go to StopRxA AbuseinGA.org

3 reasons why so many Americans are hurting so much:

1. Many of us feel a lot of anxiety or depression as teens and adults because we had some very painful experiences (called “trauma”) when we were children.⁶

Some of us had **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)** such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, witnessing violence such as domestic violence, emotional abuse and neglect, and divorce.⁷

2. Sometimes we believe things about opioids just because we see them on the internet or TV ... or we hear people saying things about them, and they’re really false beliefs.



Some of these false beliefs are:

- a. If a drug is legal it must be safe.
- b. Pills are the solution to human suffering and confusion.
- c. Drug counseling and therapy are only for people who are weak.

Seeing through false beliefs such as these helps us all begin to solve the Opioid Epidemic.

3. Sometimes we hurt because of poor diet, or not getting enough sleep or exercise.