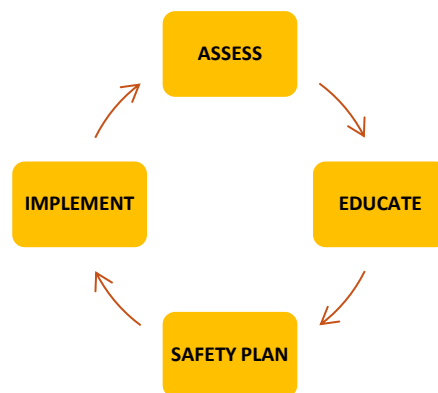


The Role of Caregivers in Assessing and Managing Risk Related to Opioid Use – A Tip Sheet



As a caregiver you are the closest person to the day-to-day activities of a child or youth who may be using opioids. You have a key role on the team who together ensure the tasks in the above diagram occur, plans are implemented and reviewed as circumstances change.

Assess Risk – children, youth and adults in their life

Review the child/youth history

- Is there a history of illicit drug use, misuse of prescription drugs – specifically opioids?
- Is there suspected or known current use of illicit drugs, misuse of prescription drugs?
- Does the young person associate with people who use drugs?
- Is there a history of substance abuse in the young person's biological family, has the young person been exposed to this?
- Is there a history of overdose for the young person?
- Is there a history of selling drugs for the young person?
- Does the young person have a Naloxone kit?

The home environment:

- Do you have a first aid kit in your home that is up to date and contains NITRILE gloves (Latex is NOT recommended)?
- Obtain information about the specific drugs used if possible and overdose history if any.
- Provide education and resources.

Education – everyone has a role

- Know who is on the team.
- Start and update a list of the child/youth's contacts (family, friends, professionals involved).
- Maintain open and honest communication with the young person about their drug use and the risks as part of a harm reduction approach.
- For all children and youth, provide them with age-appropriate information and ensure they understand the risks related to alcohol and drugs. This will help to reduce the chances of them using either substance.
- Provide consistent information to the young person and update the team regularly with any new information that would increase or decrease risk.
- Identify level of risk, ways to reduce the risk and your role.
- Clarify roles and communication strategies among all persons involved in the child/youth case plan.
- Ensure a medical appointment is scheduled and the above information is provided to the physician/pediatrician.

Link to AHS information on Opioids is:

www.stopods.ca

Safety Planning

Development of a Safety Plan – this is a team responsibility

- Involve the young person in the development of the plan.
- Know your role in the safety plan.
- Communicate the plan to the young person along with the reasons we have a plan (caring messages, safety, understand the risks etc.).

Key messages for the young person – Harm Reduction

- **Do not use alone** – if you are going to use, be with a sober friend, be in a group who watches out for one another and knows what to do in a crisis.
- **Get a Naloxone Kit**

- If high risk or known use of opioids (not just Fentanyl), encourage the individual to obtain a Naloxone Kit – someone on the team can be identified to accompany the young person to do this.
- **Know the signs of an overdose**
 - If the youth is the sober friend – ensure they know the signs of an overdose, encourage friends to obtain a Naloxone Kit and carry it, and they have and carry a phone to call 911 if needed.
- **Create a safe and open environment** between yourself and the youth, so the youth feels comfortable calling you as their caregiver at any time for assistance without fear of consequences.

Revisit and Revise Safety Plan – this is a team responsibility

- If the level of risk increases
- If there is an overdose
- If there is a placement change or respite
- If the support persons or team members change

Implement with the team

Continue to assess and revise the plan based on new information, new concerns, increase or decrease in risk.

Ensure new team members are educated, understand the plan and their role, communication and any next steps.

What if I am concerned about an overdose?

- **Should a young person experience concerning symptoms that might indicate an opioid overdose is occurring or is imminent – call 911 and follow direction.**
- Follow the Critical Incident reporting expectations in terms of notification and completion of any paperwork should there be an overdose, concerning drug related behavior or incident involving the young person including exposure to the overdose of another person
- Communicate with the team to initiate a review of the safety plan and any other next steps including therapeutic support for the young person.