



# Preventing Opioid Misuse: How Federal Employees Can Make an Impact

---

## Employee Fact Sheet

The United States is in the midst of an opioid abuse epidemic. More than 2.4 million Americans currently struggle with opioid addiction. In 2015, more than 33,000 people died from drug overdoses involving opioids and crude data for the first three quarters of 2016 indicate that the drug overdose death rate is still increasing. President Trump recently announced his intention to use all appropriate authorities to respond to the crisis.

In all likelihood, you know someone affected by opioid addiction; perhaps the struggle is within your own family. It is important to understand that addiction is a medical condition that can often be prevented or treated. There are things you can do to make an important difference.

## Learn more

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides information on [Opioid Basics](#) and how to prevent overdose. You can learn more about [rescue medications](#) for overdose emergencies from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). If you are concerned about a teen, NIDA also offers targeted information designed for [teens and parents](#). More detail on substance abuse and [addiction](#) is available from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

## Use and dispose of prescription drugs safely

Addiction often begins with the misuse of prescription medications, and nearly half of all opioid overdose deaths involve a prescription opioid. Take action to prevent this:

- Ask your doctor and dentist about alternatives to opioids for pain management.
- Ask about expected recovery time. Your doctor or pharmacist may be able to offer a smaller quantity of pills at first and then more if the pain persists.
- Use pain medications for only as long as the pain warrants.
- Never share medications with others.
- Safeguard your prescription medication while you are taking it.
- [Safely destroy or dispose](#) of unused quantities of medication.

## Seek help for yourself or a loved one when needed

Each Federal Executive Branch agency has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). [EAP services](#) are free, voluntary, and confidential. Services include employee education, supervisory training, and short term counseling to help address personal or workplace issues stemming from substance abuse. When short term counseling is not enough, EAP can provide referrals for ongoing care. You can find your EAP Administrator by contacting your local HR office and/or searching [OPM's Work-Life Contact Tool](#).

Federal employees and families can also access mental health services and addiction treatment through their Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program insurance plans. FEHB insurance plans cover in-patient and out-patient mental health care along with substance abuse treatment. Specific plan information can be found in Section 5(e) *Mental health and substance misuse disorder benefits* of FEHB plan brochures found on your insurance portal or [OPM's Healthcare & Insurance Plan Information](#) webpage.

For those not covered by EAP or FEHB insurance, SAMHSA provides information on where to [find help](#) and treatment.

### **Everyone can make an impact**

We are facing the worst drug epidemic in American history. Now more than ever, action is needed to take care of ourselves, support each other, and save lives. Educate yourself, prevent prescription drugs from being misused, and know how to get treatment if someone you love is struggling.