Opioid Abuse Awareness at USU | News

01/25/2023

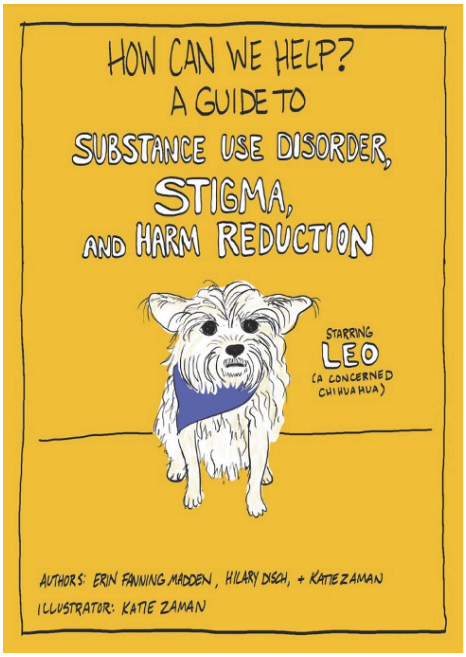
Library News

Browse by Category

News and EventsReading RecommendationsCollection HighlightsLibrary Survival Guides

Opioid Abuse Awareness at USU

Preston Waddoups, USU Libraries | preston.waddoups@usu.edu



"How Can We Help? A Guide to Substance Use Disorders, Stigma and Harm Reduction" yellow cover, featuring Leo, a concerned chihuahua. Written by Erin Fanning Madden, Hilary Disch, and Katie Zaman. Illustrations by Zaman.

Opioid abuse is a serious problem across the United States, and Utah is no exception. According to the Utah Department of Health, a combined average of 567 people in the state die from opioid overdoses each year -- that's higher than the annual number of deaths caused by car crashes in Utah.

Enter the Collection

In response to the high levels of opioid abuse, there has been a joint effort over the past several years between USU, community groups, and scholars to spread awareness of the opioid epidemic in Utah and correct misconceptions surrounding it.

"Harm Reduction is...reducing stigma" Graphic from Debunked Podcast Instagram account, created by Utah University College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Emma Eccles College of Education & Human Services, Department of Kinesiology & Health Science, Extension, and the Tribal and Rural Opioid Initiative.

As a part of this effort, Dr. Katie Zaman, the former Health and Wellness Project Coordinator at USU's Office of Health Equity and Community Engagement, illustrated a series of comics, Telling Stories to Reduce Stigma: Comics and Harm Reduction, that accessibly and sympathetically share opioid abuse recovery stories and explain harm reduction. Harm reduction is a set of strategies that aims to mitigate the harm associated with drug use while preserving respect for people who use drugs and protecting their rights. Three of the comics follow individual stories of addiction, recovery and hope, and a fourth explains the reasoning and evidence behind harm reduction strategies.

Dr. Zaman's comics are based on experiences shared in Informing the National Narrative: Stories of Utah's Opioid Crisis. This project, made possible by a USU internal grant, includes interviews from thirty-one people across the state who share their experiences with the opioid epidemic as first responders, relatives of those who suffered from an opioid addiction, or people in recovery themselves. These interviews shed light on people's first-hand experiences with opioid addictions (many of which begin with prescription painkillers), drug court, recovery programs, and social stigma in Utah, and include their

ideas on what can be done to fight the opioid epidemic and foster a more sympathetic attitude towards people with addictions. All of these interviews and their transcriptions are available online in the USU Libraries' Digital History Collections, and they are great resources for learning about the struggles faced by people with opioid addictions and the resources that help them most.

Also available in the Digital History Collections is the Cache Valley Drug Court Oral History Project, a 2017 interview project that explored the effects of Cache County's drug court. Drug courts are specifically oriented towards alcohol and drug offenses, and they aim at recovery in place of incarceration. As a companion project to Informing the National Narrative, it gives a closer look at the legal and governmental side of substance abuse and recovery efforts through the eyes of drug court participants and involved legal professionals.

"Myth in a Minute" episode on the Debunked Podcast, supported by Utah State University and the Tribal and Rural Opioid Initiative. The full episode is available for listening.

Even though the two interview-based projects have come to a close, opioid recovery and education efforts are still ongoing at USU. Debunked, the state's only podcast that uses storytelling and evidence-based health practices to debunk harmful myths around opioids and substance use disorders, is currently available to the public. Debunked is supported by USU's College of Education and Human Services and its Tribal and Rural Opioid Initiative.