

# Welcome to the Hard Hat Training Series!



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Welcome to the Hard Hat Training Series. Today, we will talk about opioid awareness. Because opioid drug abuse is a growing issue, affecting many both directly and indirectly, it deserves to be appropriately acknowledged and understood. Throughout this training, we will provide the knowledge, understanding, and resources necessary for preventing, identifying, and responding to opioid related issues.

# History of the Opioid Epidemic

The use of opioids dates back to 3400 B.C., when poppy plants were cultivated in Mesopotamia, and 460-370 B.C., when Hippocrates found opioids to be useful as a treatment for pain. Since then, opioids have been used both medically and recreationally, with the production of morphine, heroin, and oxycodone in the 1950's. Only recently, however, has the use of opioids become a severe and widely concerning issue.



This opioid epidemic has occurred in three stages, the first beginning in 1991 when there was a steep rise in the number of opioid prescriptions written for the treatment of pain, as opioids were said to be a safe, nonaddictive drug. Pharmaceutical companies also began promoting the use of opioids much more aggressively. With these changes came a rise in deaths from overdose.





The next stage began around 2010 with a large increase in the number of deaths resulting from heroin abuse. Efforts to decrease the number of opioids being prescribed for pain were initiated in order to decrease the number of people who had access to the drugs. As these efforts took effect, the number of people of all ages, sexes, and socioeconomic statuses who turned to heroin increased rapidly.



Heroin was an easy alternative to prescription opioids for most people because it was, and still is, cheap and widely available. Deaths from heroin use increased by 286% between 2002 and 2013 and roughly 80% of heroin users admitted to abusing prescription opioids before turning to the use of heroin.





The third wave in this epidemic began in 2013 with an increase in the number of deaths caused by synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, with the sharpest rise being in 2016. During this time, there were over 20,000 deaths from fentanyl and related opioids. It is estimated that the increase in the manufacture of these synthetic opioids was due to the decrease in available prescriptions for opioids.



As of October 2017, the United States has officially declared the opioid epidemic to be a public health crisis. Measures are being taken to fight against this emergency, but with nearly one thousand Americans dying from opioid overdoses each week, there is still much that needs to be done. Take the following case study for an example.



### Did You Know?

Between 21 and 29 percent of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain misuse them. In addition, about 80 percent of those who use heroin first used prescription opioids.



When Emily was 16 years old, she had her wisdom teeth removed and was prescribed Hydrocodone for pain. If she tried to stop taking the pills for a few days she would feel extremely sick, so she started using them again. Before long, she was addicted. When she could no longer get a prescription, she began using heroin because it was much cheaper. She hid her addiction from her family well, and because she maintained a 3.98 GPA and a part-time job, they did not suspect that she was struggling with addiction.





Once in college, Emily was worse than ever. One night, while she was driving high on heroin, she crashed into and killed someone in a car accident. Tried and convicted, she was sentenced to serve five years in prison for manslaughter and was still no freer from her addiction than she had ever been.

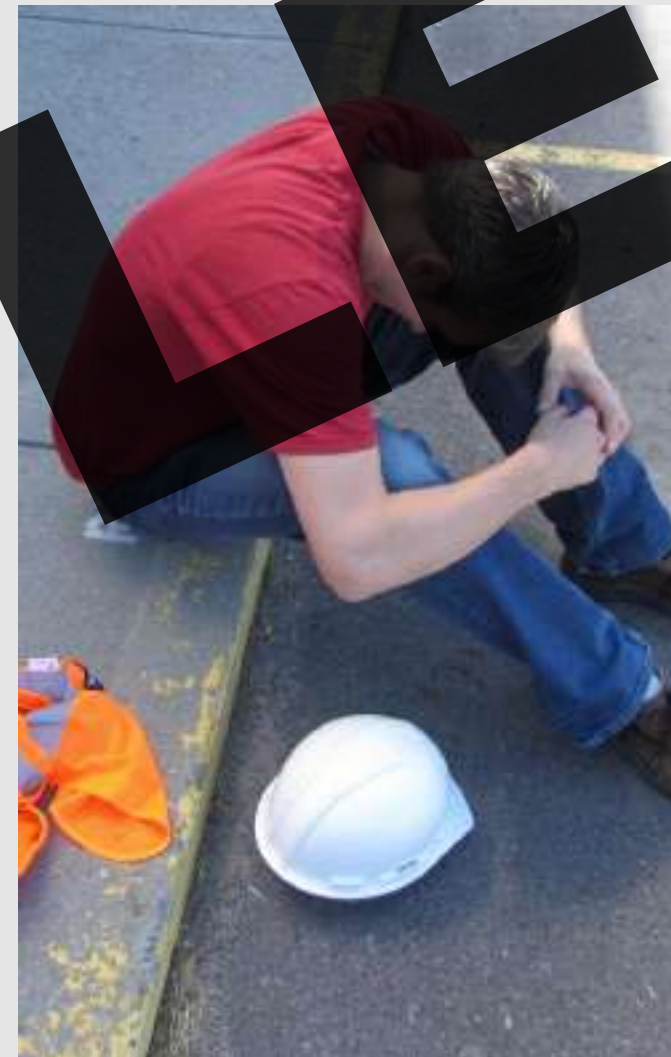


Although Emily's case is extreme, outcomes such as this are not uncommon and drive home the point that opioid addictions are surprisingly easy to form and extremely difficult to break. Not only this, but they can have heartbreaking consequences as well.





In 2017 alone, more than 47,000 Americans died from opioid overdose, accounting for 68% of all overdose-caused deaths that year. In the same year, about 1.7 million Americans suffered with substance abuse disorders from prescription opioids and 652,000 from heroin.



While these statistics address only a few aspects of the opioid drug epidemic, they prove what a massive issue it has become. Between costing the country \$78.5 billion a year and costing an individual thousands in medical bills or even their life, the opioid epidemic is refusing to be ignored. With the lives of friends and loved ones lost every day, we each must be aware of the signs and symptoms, and know how to combat the issue within our social circles, in order to stifle the crisis internationally.





In this training, we will also be discussing general knowledge about opioids, how to understand addiction, how to prevent opioid reliance, signs and warnings of an opioid addiction, treatment for addiction and overdose, and how you should address the issue of opioids in the workplace. The knowledge that you gain today could mean saving the life of someone you love tomorrow.



Before we proceed further into the training, we want to define a few basic terms relating to opioids. Please take a moment to read the definitions to yourself.

**Drug:** A substance or medicine that, when used, alters how the body functions; has physiological effects.

**Illicit:** Forbidden or banned by the law.

**Drug Misuse:** The use of prescription drugs without a prescription or in a manner other than as directed by a doctor. This includes use of a drug prescribed for someone else.

**Drug Abuse or Addiction:** Dependence on a legal or illegal drug or medication.





Keep in mind that opioid addiction, or addiction of any kind, is now recognized as a chronic disease, and that is how you should treat it. Once addicted, it is incredibly difficult for a person to stop, although it is possible. As we educate you on some of the treatments and ways to address the issue, please remember that this training is not meant as a diagnostic tool, but rather as a way to offer more knowledge and awareness of the issue.



# General

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