



The Opioid Crisis Practical Toolkit:

Helping Faith-based and Community
Leaders Bring Hope and Healing



THE OPIOID CRISIS PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Helping Faith-based and Community Leaders Bring Hope and Healing to Our Communities



“Americans of faith have taken a leading role in the compassionate approach we need to take on this [opioid] crisis, and we’re eager to support their work, however we can.”ⁱ

— Secretary Alex M. Azar, II

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Every day, **130+ Americans** die from opioid-related overdoses. In 2017, over 11.4 million Americans misused prescription opioids, 2.1 million had an opioid-use disorder due to prescription opioids or heroin,ⁱⁱ and — most concerning — 1 in 7 high school students reported that they misused opioids.ⁱⁱⁱ

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recognizes that faith- and community-based partners eagerly and willingly step in to meet the needs of their communities.

That’s why the HHS Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives (also known as “The HHS Partnership Center”) **created this Practical Toolkit for faith-based and com-**

munity leaders. We hope this toolkit will be helpful to jump-starting an action plan in your community or advancing your existing efforts to meet the needs of individuals and families struggling with addiction, and its often severe consequences.

The Partnership Center would like to extend a special thanks to our faith and community partners for generously sharing their insights on how congregations and communities can play an active and instrumental role during this current national health crisis.

Thank you for your willingness to support the journey of recovery. We are so grateful for your partnership!



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This HHS Partnership Center toolkit is segmented into seven key areas that briefly cover some practical ways your community can consider bringing hope and healing to those in need.

To further complement this kit, we recommend the following:

1. **Sign up** for our monthly e-newsletter or breaking news alerts. Only your email address is needed: [GO.USA.gov/xE4Zd](https://go.usa.gov/xE4Zd)
2. **Connect** with us on social media (Facebook® and Twitter®)
3. **Watch and share** helpful Partnership Center educational videos (YouTube®)
4. **Email us** your comments, stories of success, how you're using this kit, etc.



To begin an action plan in your community, we encourage you to reprint and share the Practical Toolkit outline, which is printed for you on the next two pages.

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 [HHS.Gov/Partnerships](https://www.hhs.gov/partnerships)

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OVERVIEW



INCREASE AWARENESS

- Addiction is a treatable, chronic, medical condition. Tap local health experts to help diminish the stigma surrounding the condition, its symptoms, as well as any contributing factors.
- 62.6 percent of Americans misuse opioids for pain. Promote an understanding of pain treatment options and management. [GO.USA.gov/xP7gW](https://www.go.usa.gov/xP7gW)
- Educate your community by downloading and distributing information from the CDC's Rx Campaign [CDC.gov/RxAwareness](https://www.cdc.gov/RxAwareness) and SAMHSA's Opioid Resource website [GO.USA.gov/xPcmv](https://www.go.usa.gov/xPcmv).
- Invite individuals in recovery to share their stories with your community.

OPEN YOUR DOORS



- Increase the number of "life lines" in your community by hosting or connecting people to community-based, recovery support programs (e.g., NA, AA, Celebrate Recovery, etc.)
- Post local meetings and the link to SAMHSA's <https://FindTreatment.gov> in your newsletters, community calendars, websites, and social media channels.
- Screen a film on the opioid crisis and host a post-show community dialogue. Films, such as NOVA's *Addiction*, *Heroin(e)* or the FBI's *Chasing the Dragon*, include free discussion guides.

BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY



- Train community members to recognize the symptoms of an overdose and how to administer naloxone, an opioid overdose-reversal drug. [GO.USA.gov/xE2EB](https://www.go.usa.gov/xE2EB)
- Coordinate a Mental Health First Aid® or Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) training for your community.
- Learn about trauma-informed approaches and the critical connection between recovery and resiliency for people affected by trauma. [GO.USA.gov/xpTVg](https://www.go.usa.gov/xpTVg)

REBUILD AND RESTORE



- Support individuals and families who are rebuilding their lives by assisting with food or housing. Consider a bike repair and loan program for those needing transportation.
- Connect with job placement efforts and certification programs that provide life skills, on-the-job training, and internships. Consider partnering with the local business sector to support folks in getting back to work and to school (e.g., *culinary arts, housekeeping, welding, etc.*).
- Offer financial literacy courses or assistance with job readiness that includes reading, writing, and communication skills, or help with securing their GEDs.



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OVERVIEW

GET AHEAD OF THE PROBLEM



- Find ways to give teens the straight facts about brain development and substance use, so they can make smart life choices. [Teens.DrugAbuse.gov](https://www.Teens.DrugAbuse.gov)
- Host educational series on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma-informed approaches. [GO.USA.gov/xE4WY](https://www.GO.USA.gov/xE4WY)
- Learn how to identify and support youth at high-risk for substance misuse with prevention efforts. [GO.USA.gov/xpTNv](https://www.GO.USA.gov/xpTNv)
- Create or volunteer for mentoring programs that help to strengthen the resilience of younger generations.

CONNECT AND COLLABORATE




- Participate in local coalitions by contacting the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. [CADCA.org](https://www.CADCA.org)
- Help prevent access and misuse of prescription drugs in your home and community. Partner with local pharmacies near you, as well as local law enforcement, and host a “Prescription Drug Take Back Day.” [TakeBackDay.DEA.gov](https://www.TakeBackDay.DEA.gov)
- Partner with local providers to assist foster families by donating clothing, furnishings, and other necessities, as well as volunteering for support services (e.g., babysitting, house-keeping, lawn care, etc.).

FEDERAL RESOURCES



- Share the federal resources included in this toolkit. To access the online version of our Practical Toolkit (live links), please visit. [HHS.gov/Opioid-Practical-Toolkit](https://www.HHS.gov/Opioid-Practical-Toolkit)
- Sign up for our monthly newsletters: Partnerships@HHS.gov and follow us on Twitter® (@PartnersForGood) and Facebook® (@HHSPartnershipCenter).

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Increase Awareness

A West Virginia pastor wisely said,

**“Churches are not neutral bystanders:
What they don’t say is just as important
as what they do say.”^v**

Finding a supportive community is essential to recovery. However, old conventions, based on misunderstandings about substance use disorders (SUDs) and other behavioral issues, can too often stand in the way of a community’s willingness to provide the critical support and connections people need.



“When I meet a Jewish person who is in active addiction, I do not suggest they go to a synagogue and pray. The first place I’m going to send them is to the appropriate 12-step group.”^{vi}

— Rabbi Taub

It is critical that behavioral health issues, like SUDs, are increasingly understood as **treatable, chronic, medical conditions** — and not a personal or moral failing. Our hope is that, in time, prejudice and shame will be replaced by a spirit of compassion and hope that opens doors, hearts, and resources to those suffering with addiction.

Getting Started

To help increase awareness, you can partner with local community and public health experts, law enforcement agencies, and others to help educate your community on:

- **Addiction as a Treatable Disease and Long-Term Chronic Condition:** Help community members understand the need for long-term support of people in recovery. bit.ly/PCPT-1



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Increase Awareness

CONTINUED

- **Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT):**

MAT is the life-saving use of medications, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to provide a “whole-patient” approach to the treatment of opioid use disorders (OUDs).

- **Pain Management:** Increase patient awareness of pain treatment alternatives and management. [GO.USA.gov/xP7gW](https://www.go.usa.gov/xP7gW)

Learn to ask the doctor:

- “Is this an opioid?”
- “Is an opioid necessary?”
- “Are there alternatives to using opioids for pain relief?”

- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)/ Trauma Informed Approaches:** Help others learn how childhood adversities can actually increase a person’s risk for substance misuse and challenge their recovery efforts. bit.ly/PCPT-4

“Addiction is a terrible medical disease that no one would choose to have happen to them.”^{vii}



—Sarah Wakeman, MD

Medical Director, Substance Use Disorders Initiative, Mass. General Hospital

- **Safe Drug Disposal:** More than half of those who abused prescription painkillers actually obtained them from friends or family. Promote safe drug disposal tips and participate in your community’s “Take Back Drug Days” to help reduce the supply of prescription opioids getting into the wrong hands. bit.ly/PCPT-5
- **Good Samaritan Laws:** Invite local law enforcement officials to talk to your group about the laws in your state that may protect those who are providing and/or calling for help when someone has overdosed. bit.ly/PCPT-6



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Open Your Doors

Connecting to a supportive community and reestablishing strong relationships are essential elements to ongoing recovery.

To foster recovery, communities can host or connect people to community-based, 12-step and other recovery support programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Celebrate Recovery, and so many others. These programs can act as lifelines to those with SUDs by connecting them to others in recovery. These programs can also support those receiving medication-assisted treatment (MAT), as part of their recovery.^{iv}

Getting Started

Here are just a few ways to open your doors to the community:

- **Offer your space** for weekly recovery programs and/or self-help support groups for people with substance-use disorders, as well as their families who may also need support.
- **Connect people** to existing recovery support programs in your community.

- **Offer free transportation** to treatment services and/or recovery support programs.
- **Promote [FindTreatment.gov](https://www.findtreatment.gov) and local support groups** in your newsletters, community calendars, websites, Facebook® pages, and other social outlets. Consider also including:
 - Local [CelebrateRecovery.com](https://www.CelebrateRecovery.com), [AA.org](https://www.AA.org), [NA.org](https://www.NA.org), or other mutual aid support groups. [FacesandVoicesofRecovery.com](https://www.FacesandVoicesofRecovery.com) also hosts helpful list of support groups.
 - SAMHSA's [FindTreatment.gov](https://www.findtreatment.gov) services locator and National Helpline (Free, confidential help in English/Spanish, 24/7): (800) 662-HELP (4357). bit.ly/PCPT-29
- **Invite the community to a screening of film** on the opioid crisis and host a post-show community dialogue. Films like NOVA's *Addiction*, *Heroin(e)*, or the FBI's *Chasing the Dragon* include free downloadable discussion guides.
- **When offering public or congregational prayer** — particularly prayers for the sick — please pray for people who are suffering opioid or substance use disorders.



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Building Community Capacity

We can save lives by referring people to proper treatment and helping them navigate systems of continued care. In fact, leaders in faith and community organizations can be trained to:

- Respond to emergency situations,
- Make referrals to treatment and recovery support providers,
- Provide ongoing support for those in recovery and living with an addiction, and
- Become peer-recovery coaches.

Getting Started

Your community can partner with local expertise (including public health offices, treatment facilities, hospitals, community health centers, or nonprofit service providers) to help deliver capacity-building trainings, such as:

- **Mental Health First Aid:** Gain the basic skills to help someone experiencing a mental or behavioral health crisis. bit.ly/PCPT-8

- **Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT):** A public health approach to encourage early intervention and refer people to the appropriate treatment and support. SAMHSA.gov/SBIRT
- **Emergency Response:** Learn how to recognize overdose symptoms and administer naloxone (opioid overdose-reversing drug).
- **Peer-Recovery Models:** Sharing experiences brings hope to people in recovery and promotes a sense of belonging within the community. bit.ly/PCPT-7
- **Trauma-Informed Approaches and Trauma-Specific Interventions:** Learn about the critical connections between recovery and resilience for people impacted by trauma. bit.ly/PCPT-9
- **Motivational Interviewing:** Learn a counseling approach that seeks to facilitate and strengthen an individual's motivation to change misuse of substances and other risky behaviors. bit.ly/PCPT-10



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Rebuild and Restore

Addiction can leave the lives of individuals and their families dramatically altered by the loss of jobs, homes, or damaged relationships. For decades, faith and community-based organizations have been providing the kinds of wrap-around services that can help to restore and rebuild lives and livelihoods. The opportunity here is to connect those programs to SAMHSA’s Eight Dimensions of Wellness, which will support a life in recovery. [GO.USA.gov/xP74Y](https://www.go.usa.gov/xP74Y)



“Whenever I ask people on the front lines of America’s drug crisis what more we can do to support and help their work, they remind me how essential it is to address the basic needs of individuals with addiction, such as stable and safe housing, food, basic medical care, and an opportunity for employment.”

—Nora Volkow, M.D., Director
National Institute on Drug Abuse^{viii}

Getting Started

- **Provide** help with employment readiness, housing, transportation, food, clothing, or assist with child care.
- **Designate** a community leader to connect people to essential services by creating a database or use United Way’s [211.org](https://www.211.org).
- **Offer** life-readiness and coaching programs for formerly incarcerated citizens who are re-entering society.
- **Mentor** people on managing their finances.
- **Support** local foster care families by gathering resources, donating clothing items or other much-needed necessities, including cribs and car seats.^{ix}



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Get Ahead of the Problem

A leader from the Boys & Girls Club of America said recently, “Children may make up 25 percent of our population, but they are 100 percent of our future.”

Children exposed to abuse, neglect, mental illness, substance-use disorders in the household — or any other Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) — may experience poorer health outcomes, learning problems, and are at higher risk for substance use disorders.^{ix}

In order to nurture the healthy development of future generations, we need to reduce known risk factors, elevate protective factors — such as early intervention and the support of stable and caring relationships — and implement evidence-based programs that support families and empower youth.

Getting Started

- **Educate** your community leaders and family members about ACEs and their effect on future behavior and actions. Offer programs

on positive parenting and mentor youth and young adults. bit.ly/PCPT-11

- **Implement** the six key principles of trauma-informed approaches throughout your organization. GO.USA.gov/xpTp5
- **Include the subject** of substance-use disorders in your youth programs and ministries.
- **Host** recovery support programs, such as The Landing USA or Teen and Youth SMART Recovery bit.ly/CR-TheLanding and SmartRecovery.org/Teens.



“We know that what protects children from adverse experiences is nurturing parenting skills, stable family relationships, and caring adults outside the family who can serve as role models or mentors.”^x

—VADM Jerome M. Adams, M.D., M.P.H.
U.S. Surgeon General



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Get Ahead of the Problem CONTINUED

- Create a place on your website, in your newsletters, or on your social media platforms for links to helpful resources, such as:
 - NIDA’s “Teen Talk” website.
[Teens.DrugAbuse.gov](https://www.drugabuse.gov/teens)
 - Partnership for Drug-Free Kids’ “Above the Influence” website.
[AboveTheInfluence.com](https://www.abovetheinfluence.com)
 - U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Programs:
[JustThinkTwice.com](https://www.justthinktwice.com)
[GetSmartAboutDrugs.com](https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.com)
[CampusDrugPrevention.com](https://www.campusdrugprevention.com)
- Help ensure all children and youth have access to safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments, so they can reach their life potential.



Connect and Collaborate

With lives being lost daily, the opioid crisis is an all-hands-on-deck epidemic. Across the U.S., treatment professionals, law enforcement, faith communities, service providers, drug courts, schools, recreation centers, media, businesses, policy-makers, families, and youth leaders are stepping forward to help contribute their time, talent, and resources to help coordinate and serve those struggling with addiction.

Find Coalition Partners

After assessing your community’s needs, explore available coalition partners in your community:

- Visit the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. [CADCA.org](https://www.cadca.org)
- Contact your regional public health department, HHS Regional Offices, or the SAMHSA Regional Offices. bit.ly/PCPT-15, bit.ly/PCPT-16
- Connect with healthcare providers, recovery support and treatment professionals, drug courts and others to lend your communities



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Connect and Collaborate CONTINUED

“health assets” to the continuum of care for those seeking addiction recovery.

Getting Started

- **Lend Your Organization’s Health Assets:** Whether you have space for a support group to meet, can hold or host educational forums, coordinate volunteers to help transport people to treatment and recovery support services, or help with job interviews, your community’s contribution is an essential element to the recovery journey of individuals and their families.
- **Review SAMHSA’s toolkit:** “One Voice, One Community: Building Strong and Effective Partnerships Among Community and Faith Organizations.” bit.ly/PCPT-17



“No single organization or person can address the multitude of services needed to help people affected by mental health or substance use conditions. ...

“The best sources are the people who live, serve and work in the community and the best results are often seen when they undertake such action together.”^{xi}

— SAMHSA’s “One Voice, One Community”

- **Recognize National Observances and participate in activities:**
 - National Prevention Week
[SAMHSA.Gov/Prevention-Week](https://www.samhsa.gov/prevention-week)
 - National Recovery Month
[RecoveryMonth.gov](https://www.recoverymonth.gov)



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Federal Resources — General

The following are opioid-related resources from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute for Drug Abuse (NIDA), and other HHS divisions.

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit (SAMHSA) bit.ly/PCPT-38	Visit the “ Facts for Community Members ” and “ Safety Advice for Patient and Family Members ” sections of this kit. Download them to share with your community.
“Decisions in Recovery: Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder” bit.ly/PCPT-37	SAMHSA’s handbook for anyone seeking timely help or information about cutting down or cutting out narcotics, prescription pain medications, heroin, and/or other opioid drugs.
“Step-by-Step” Guides bit.ly/PCPT-22	These NIDA guides walk families through decision points and offer rich lists of resources.
Opioid Basics (CDC) bit.ly/PCPT-23	Important information regarding the opioid epidemic that’s designed for non-health professionals and ideal for community and faith-based organizations. Includes helpful commonly-used terms.
Q&A on Naloxone bit.ly/PCPT-24	NIDA information for community leaders on potentially lifesaving drugs and how they are being administered.



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Federal Resources — General

CONTINUED

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
<p>“Signs of Substance Abuse and Addiction” EasyRead.DrugAbuse.gov</p>	<p>NIDA’s “Easy-to-Read Drug Facts.” Great for faith-based and community leaders to download and share. bit.ly/PCPT-26a</p>
<p>“Pathways to Safer Opioid Use” bit.ly/PCPT-40</p>	<p>Health.gov shows how to engage the medical system more proactively by using this interactive tool. Designed for health professionals.</p>
<p>“Safer, More Effective Pain Management” bit.ly/PCPT-28</p>	<p>A CDC resource to inform providers’ ability to offer safer, more effective pain management, and to support clinical decision-making about prescribing opioids.</p>
<p>Substance Abuse Treatment Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP bit.ly/PCPT-29</p>	<p>A confidential, free service from SAMHSA — along with referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations — that is available to individuals and family members facing substance abuse and mental health issues.</p>
<p>FindTreatment.gov Services Locator FindTreatment.gov</p>	<p>An updated and robust resource from SAMHSA, which helps one find a local substance abuse treatment facility.</p>
<p>Find a Community Health Center FindAHealthCenter.HRSA.gov</p>	<p>Community Health Centers are one of the largest systems of primary and preventive care in the nation, which provides care to millions of patients — regardless of ability to pay.</p>



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Federal Resources — Youth and Family

CONTINUED

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
<p>“Know the Risks: E-Cigarettes and Young People” e-Cigarettes.SurgeonGeneral.gov</p>	<p>The Office of the U.S Surgeon General and the CDC shares facts on e-cigarette use among youth and young adults through videos, tip sheets, and other resources including the Surgeon General’s Advisory on E-cigarette Use Among Youth.</p>
<p>“Teen Talk” Teens.DrugAbuse.gov</p>	<p>Learn about teen drug use and the brain. This NIDA website features videos, games, blog posts and much more!</p>
<p>“Easy-to-Read Drug Facts” EasyRead.DrugAbuse.gov</p>	<p>Videos, such as “Anyone Can Become Addicted to Drugs” and “Why are Drugs so Hard to Quit?” provide critical information in an easy-to-understand format.</p>
<p>“What to Do If Your Teen or Young Adult Has a Problem with Drugs” GO.USA.gov/xpTvf</p>	<p>NIDA answers timely questions about teens and substance misuse. Helpful content to share with families and individuals in your community.</p>
<p>“Family Checkup: Positive Parenting Prevents Drug Abuse” DrugAbuse.Gov/Family-Checkup</p>	<p>NIDA’s five questions highlight key parenting skills that are important in preventing the initiation and progression of drug use among youth.</p>
<p>Health Library of Federal Adolescent Health Resources on Substance Abuse bit.ly/PCPT-32</p>	<p>Office of Adolescent Health’s comprehensive library of federal resources on adolescent substance abuse, including the abuse of prescription drugs.</p>



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Federal Resources — Youth and Family

CONTINUED

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION
Partnership DrugFree.org	Resources for parents or other caregivers looking for information and strategies to prevent or stop illicit drug use by adolescents.
GetSmartAboutDrugs.com JustThinkTwice.com	Online DEA resources for parents and teens
“Growing up Drug Free: A Parent’s Guide to Prevention” bit.ly/PCPT-33	A joint effort between the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education, which provides information and research. Parents will understand why kids use drugs and how parents can be involved in helping them stay drug-free.
“Above the Influence” AboveTheInfluence.com	The adolescent-gear website from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP).
“Talk: They Will Hear You” GO.USA.gov/xpTwb	Prepare for one of the most important conversations you may ever have with your kids about underage drinking using SAMHSA’s helpful app.
National Children’s Mental Health Awareness Day SAMHSA.gov/Children	This yearly awareness campaign focuses on the importance of emphasizing positive mental health, as part of a child’s overall development.



REMEMBER: Check out our educational videos on YouTube!

 [/HHSPartnershipCenter](https://www.youtube.com/HHSPartnershipCenter)



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Endnotes

- i Alex M. Azar II, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Plenary Address to National Governors Association (Feb. 24, 2018). Retrieved from <https://go.usa.gov/xE2AC>.
- ii “Understanding The Epidemic,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Mar. 15, 2018), available at www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html.
- iii “Reports and Detailed Tables From the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH),” Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (Sept. 2018), available at www.samhsa.gov/data/nsduh/reports-detailed-tables-2017-NSDUH.
- iv AB Laudet, Keith Morgen, WL White, “The Role of Social Supports, Spirituality, Religiousness, Life Meaning and Affiliation with 12-Step Fellowships in Quality of Life Satisfaction Among Individuals in Recovery from Alcohol and Drug Problems,” *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly*, 2006, at 24(1-2):33-73.
- v Monique Parsons, “Inside Chabad’s ‘Jewish Recovery’ Movement” (March 12, 2009), available at www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101794919.
- vi West Virginia Council of Churches, *Hope for a Better Future* (2017), 9.
- vii Bishop Nash, *Addiction Training Offered for Area’s Religious Leaders*, (Sept. 8, 2017) available at <https://bit.ly/2VzIbtD>.
- viii “Addressing the Socioeconomic Complexities of Addiction—Lessons from the Kensington Neighborhood in Philadelphia,” National Institute of Drug Abuse (Oct 29, 2019), available at <https://bit.ly/PCPT-35>
- ix There are good models of faith and community based organizations supporting foster care families. For one such example, see Vault Fostering Community, available at www.vaultfosteringcommunity.org.
- x CS Widom and SM Brzustowicz, “MAOA and the ‘cycle of violence:’ childhood abuse and neglect, MAOA genotype, and risk for violent and antisocial behavior,” *Biol Psychiatry*, 2006 Oct 1; 60(7):684-9 (June 30, 2018), available at www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16814261.
- xi *Opioids: Recovery, Prevention, & Hope: National Experts on Opioids Equip Faith and Community Leaders*, (The Partnership Center livestreamed event Sept. 27, 2017) available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tNKAASSHpQ.
- xii “Building Community and Interfaith Partnerships in Support of Recovery,” Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, HHS Publication No: (SMA) 13-4739, available at <https://>



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