

RCORP-ETC



C.O.U.R.A.G.E.

Combating Opioid Use in Rural Appalachia with Grace and Evidence

HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration) has awarded the University of Tennessee and its community partners funding for a three-year grant for Project COURAGE (Combating Opioid Use in Rural Appalachia with Grace and Evidence). The purpose of this project is to focus on substance use prevention for rural youth and their caregivers, in addition to improving Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) treatment and recovery services by supporting integrated, interdisciplinary care in rural East Tennessee. The COURAGE service area includes Campbell, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Scott, and Union Counties, and two rural census tracts in Jefferson County.

As RCORP-ETC members can attest, the epidemic of OUD has had a profound impact on the health and well-being of East Tennesseans, particularly those who live in rural areas with limited opportunities and support services, and high levels of stigma related to substance use disorder, including opioids. People who use drugs often experience ostracization from community spaces where they might otherwise find the support they need to move forward into recovery, sometimes avoiding care for fear of engaging with government-associated systems such as public health services and law enforcement. Youth can be exposed to opioid use in or outside the home. Evidence-based programs and support their development of skills to resist substance use and promote a healthy transition to adulthood. Workshops to support caregivers' and teachers' use of youth development skills will be a practical and necessary expansion of prevention efforts.

COURAGE collaborators include ICARE-Union County, Live Free Claiborne, The Hill Claiborne, United Methodist Church of Newport, and several academic programs at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville: Public Health, SMART Initiative, and Pharmacy.

ICARE-Union County will emphasize the youth-related activities including, workshops for teachers and caregivers and the youth prevention programming, which will serve 120 young people across the three years.

By Katherine Buchman



Live Free Claiborne will offer HIV and Hepatitis C (HCV) testing and linkage to treatment/services in addition to quarterly anti-stigma workshops and handouts for clients.

The Hill-Claiborne, Newport United Methodist Church, and the SMART Initiative will develop and implement a mentoring curriculum to promote OUD prevention efforts in faith-based communities. They will also provide an annual event to encourage congregations to support their community members affected by SUD/OUD.

Finally, project COURAGE will develop and implement a mentoring curriculum to promote Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) and Narcan distribution by rural pharmacists. Across the three years 10 pharmacists will be mentored in strategies to reduce the impact of OUD in their communities.

Collectively, these activities are geared toward addressing opioid use through easily accessible community partners, including syringe services program, drug prevention coalitions, schools, faith-based communities, and rural pharmacies. Combined, optimally COURAGE will result in supporting safer environments for youth and increasing affirming, non-stigmatizing services for PWUD in rural East Tennessee.

If you have questions about this program or would like to get involved, please contact the Laurie L. Meschke at llmeschke@utk.edu or 865-964-8368. Visit the [RCORP-ETC website](https://www.rcorp-etc.org) for related information and resources.

RCORP-ETC MEETING

FRIDAY, JANUARY 20, 2023, 1-3PM ET

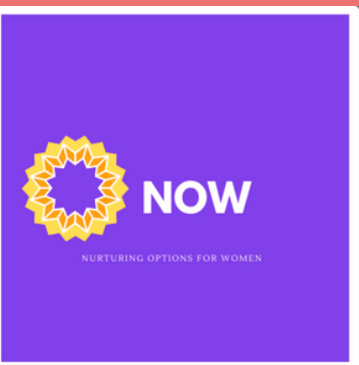
VIA ZOOM:



Youth Substance Use Prevention:

Opportunities and Strategies to Capitalize on the Assets of Youth and Adults who Care

This meeting will review a systems approach to promote the health and well-being of youth, with an emphasis on a youth development approach. In addition to youth-centered strategies, an emphasis on adults in supporting a successful transition to adulthood for their young people will be reviewed.



TO REGISTER, GO TO:
[HTTPS://UTK.CO1.QUALTRICS.COM/JFE/FORM/SV_EFBDIUOQMNJT](https://UTK.CO1.QUALTRICS.COM/JFE/FORM/SV_EFBDIUOQMNJT)
WHG
OR FOLLOW THE QR CODE

ZOOM CONTACT INFORMATION
WILL BE PROVIDED TO ALL
REGISTRANTS PRIOR TO THE
MEETING.

This event is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of awards (G25RH32484, GA1RH33552 and G26RH40096) totaling \$1,750,000 with 0% funded with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government.

Project HOPE - It's a Wrap!



HEALING OUD THROUGH PREVENTION AND EXPERTISE



After 3 years of serving the East Tennessee Community, the Project Hope grant has officially ended. The HOPE team with the support of the RCORP-ETC was able to accomplish a great number of community outreach projects to combat Opioid Use Disorder (OUD). With the help of 160 RCORP-ETC members, the Hope team hosted 11 consortium meetings and 3 policy forums to nearly 340 participants.

To promote OUD prevention, Hope provided a series of trainings tailored for youth workers and health providers. This included 19 training sessions for youth workers to support youth-led success, highlighting key strategies for help youth prevent Opioid Use Disorder. Over 240 youth workers attended the professional development trainings.

Project Hope conducted 12 health provider training sessions that focused on enhancing the capacity of professionals to treat persons with OUD. Topics included trauma-informed care, OUD communication, tips for using the Controlled Substance Monitoring Database, chronic pain management, and SBIRT screening. Project HOPE also provided narcan trainings to promote the reduction of fatal overdoses. Over 50 community members participated in these trainings.

Project HOPE and the UTK College of Law collaborated to provide an expungement event for Jefferson and Cocke Counties. Expungement provides a pathway to employment and access to driver's license reinstatement for persons with a history of justice-involvement. Over 100 community members' criminal records and fines were expunged or taken off of their records.

Project HOPE provided supplies and grant writing support to Live Free, to enhance access to syringe services programming in rural East Tennessee. We also hosted 2 drug take-back events. Collectively, over 70 pounds of drugs were removed from the community.

In terms of social outreach, Project HOPE disseminated 6 quarterly newsletters. This team was also led marketing and networking efforts to promote hub and spoke service expansion, with an emphasis on Claiborne County.

Finally, Project HOPE implemented Youth HOPE, a OUD prevention program in Cocke and Scott Counties, both online and in person.

Much appreciation to HRSA and our East Tennessee partners who made this all possible. We look forward to continuing to nourish and support OUD/SUD prevention efforts in rural East Tennessee.

RURAL COMMUNITIES
OPIOID RESPONSE
PROGRAM
EAST TENNESSEE
CONSORTIUM

RCORP-
ETC

July 2022

Community Capacity

160 Consortium members

11 Consortium meetings

3 Policy Forums

338 participants

Strengths and Themes Assessment
March 2021

152 respondents from across
RCORP-ETC region

82.8% of respondents
had someone close to
them with opioid use
disorder

75% of respondents
reported a moderate
level of SUD-related
stigma

Project HOPE

Healing OUD through Prevention and Expertise

TRAINING

19 Training sessions developed for youth workers.

242 Youth workers received training

12 Health provider training sessions conducted

15 Health providers received training

13 Narcan training sessions conducted

68 Community members received Narcan training

5 New healthcare professionals were mentored to provide medications for opioid use disorder

Online Connections

13 Digital Stories

300-500 Views per story

900 Average monthly website visits

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Expungement Criminal records and fines of 100 people were expunged

Supplies and grant writing support to establish Live Free Claiborne's syringe exchange program

Drug Take-Back Hosted 2 drug take-back events; Distributed 400 drug take-back envelopes; Gathered 77.2 pounds of drugs

Developed and disseminated 6 quarterly project newsletters; Provided interview with radio station STAR 102.1

Hub and Spoke Marketing and networking to promote expansion of Spirit software

Developed age-appropriate, in-person youth development curriculum and adapted into online-based version.

21 youth participated in Youth HOPE, an OUD Research and advocacy program, in Cocke and Scott counties

Harm Reduction

Social Outreach

Youth Engagement

This effort was supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of awards 1U49CE000484, 1U49CE000485 and 1U49CE000486 totaling \$1,750,000 with 50% funded with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government.

Project HOPE

RCORP-ETC

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

Beating Stigma One Word at a Time:

The Impact and Importance of Person-First Language and Other Affirming Language Choices

By Katherine Buchman, MPH

We all know that feeling we get when someone's word choice dismisses, disrespects, or shows ignorance of our own experiences or identities. Words are powerful and can imply the attitude of the speaker even when it is not stated explicitly. We can also use language to empower and affirm people, by using words that are either neutral or supportive. This article is meant to review the concept of Person-First language and introduce a comprehensive language guide developed by the Tennessee Department of Health to help those of us working in marginalized, underserved, or maligned communities to speak in ways that will improve communication and foster trust with those we serve.

The Person-First Language concept was first introduced during a conference on disabilities in 1974, [1] and has since grown beyond that field to encompass most health outcomes and personal identities and some experiences. The basic tenet of this practice is to center individuals (the "person") rather than health conditions or characteristics. Since most of us identify with a number of different characteristics and many of us have one or more health conditions, person-first language acknowledges that whichever characteristic or condition is being referenced is only one small part of that person's identity, and also does not prioritize that element over other parts of the individual's identity without their explicit permission.

1. Crocker AF, Smith SN. Person-first language: are we practicing what we preach? J Multidiscip Healthc. 2019 Feb 8;12:125-129. doi: 10.2147/JMDH.S140067. PMID: 30799931; PMCID: PMC6371927.

INSTEAD OF...

USE...

drug user/addict

Person who uses drugs (PWUD)
or person who injects drugs (PWID) (when appropriate)
or person with substance use disorder (SUD) (when appropriate)

alcoholic

Person with Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

disabled person

Person with a disability
or person with X (name of specific condition)

criminal/felon/convict/inmate

Person who is/has been incarcerated
Or person who is system-impacted

homeless person

Person experiencing homelessness
Or person who is unhoused

HIV positive person

Person living with HIV (PLWH)
or person with HIV (PWH)

Clearly this small set of examples doesn't begin to cover the range of possible ways we can change our language to affirm and support people we serve in the community. Other opportunities include removing stigmatizing or judgmental language from our vocabulary and replacing it with neutral and accurate terms.

Following are a few more examples:

Instead of...	Use this instead...
dirty or clean needles	used or new/unused/sterile syringes
rehab/detox center	treatment center
clean/dirty (as in: "She is clean:	Not currently using substances/currently using substances
prostitution	sex work

There are so many different areas where adjusting our language to be accurate and person-centered can make major improvements in our relationships with clients and community members, and the Tennessee Department of Health HIV/STI/Viral Hepatitis program, along with the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse have developed a short but comprehensive language guide addressing issues such as mental health, sexual and reproductive health, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, and more. This living document was developed as part of the End the Syndemic program, which is a statewide collaboration between community partners representing the fields of HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), Viral Hepatitis, and Substance Use Disorder. You can find the ETS Language Guidance [here](http://www.endthesyndemictn.org) and learn more about the ETS collaboration using this link: www.endthesyndemictn.org.

Partner Spotlight

Anna Marie Cooksey, Public Health Graduate Assistant for COURAGE

Social Media

I am excited to revamp the RCORP-ETC social media and make our accounts a place for individuals to find and share resources. My intention is that when somebody visits an RCORP-ETC page they can find events within our service area and infographics that they can share with their own following to help us reduce stigma and educate our audience. I think having a strong social media presence that offers clear, concise, and aesthetically pleasing infographics is a vital part of outreach and that social media should be used as a tool for community health education.

RCORP-ETC

I was drawn to work with RCORP-ETC as a lifelong Tennessean who came to Appalachia six years ago and fell in love with the rich culture and diverse history of the area. I am a big supporter of the resurgence of Appalachian pride and reclamation of Appalachian heritage among my generation. I have seen the effects of the Opioid Epidemic in Appalachian firsthand. I want to do my part to mitigate those effects and to make sure that younger Appalachians have more opportunities and are proud of where they are from. I feel that working on COURAGE is giving me the opportunity to make change within my community and bring resources and assistance to those who need it most

STAND, Schools Together Allowing No Drugs Scott County

Mission: We STAND together to provide drug, alcohol, and tobacco strategies to reduce substance abuse among youth and, over time, among adults, as well as serve as a catalyst for increased citizen participation and greater collaboration among all sectors and organizations within the community

Services: Education for youth and adults as well as public awareness campaigns that focus on the prevention of drug/alcohol abuse

STAND was featured in the October 2022 RCORP-ETC meeting on peer recovery support specialists. Check out the recording of this meeting at <https://tnopioid.utk.edu/education-and-training-materials/>

