

The Opioid Epidemic in Santa Clara County



This is my son Kyle in Los Altos High School. He played rugby. He was intelligent, funny, sensitive, caring, and an excellent writer and great guitarist. He graduated UC Berkeley with a BA in English. He struggled with an anxiety disorder. In his junior year of high school, he began self-medicating with alcohol. The alcoholism eventually progressed into Opioid Use Disorder. He died from an overdose of heroin laced with fentanyl in November 2019.



This is my son Cameron Showecker. When you hear about people that light up a room with their enthusiasm that was Cam. He was outgoing, competitive, intelligent (graduated with honors from Menlo College), loving and always there to help a friend. He broke his back snowboarding in high school and was prescribed opiates after surgery. This led to an addiction to heroin for seven years. He overdosed in September 2015 from a combination of street drugs.



This is my son Linus. He was a smart, funny and charismatic teenager, who had transferred from Saratoga to Los Gatos High School in 2018 to pursue his wrestling ambitions. He caring and warm-hearted personality allowed him to quickly make friends wherever he would set his foot. Linus started experimenting with marijuana, which resulting in wider substance abuse issues in his late teenage years. He used illicit street drugs during his final year; accidentally succumbing to a fentanyl-laced pill shortly before his 18th birthday.



This is my son Cannon. Cannon was bold. He loved life and life loved him right back. He was outgoing, compassionate and very bright. Cannon went to Serra High School in San Mateo. At age 15 he started experiencing anxiety and depression. He turned to marijuana to self-medicate, eventually progressing to street drugs like Xanax and Oxycodone. He fought his drug addiction gaining recovery, but a year later, deep grief triggered a single relapse. He died from that opioid overdose in March 2020.



My precious son, Evan was athletic, ambitious, funny and so smart. He had graduated from the University of Nevada with a BS in Biology/Bio-Chemistry. He was doing research work that he loved. He began experimenting with marijuana in high school. In college, his girlfriend introduced him to street drugs, and he became addicted. He was actively fighting his addiction. Evan died of a heroin/cocaine overdose in March of 2020.

The Opioid Epidemic Is Killing Our Kids

Fentanyl-related overdose deaths are increasing at an unprecedented rate in Santa Clara County.

Deaths in Santa Clara County

2018	2019	2020
60 opioid overdose deaths	88 opioid overdose deaths	115 opioid overdose deaths (Jan. – June)
11 fentanyl overdose deaths	25 fentanyl overdose deaths	68 confirmed fentanyl deaths

Around 30 of the 68 fentanyl related overdose deaths in 2020 were youth ages 16-29.

Addiction (Substance Use Disorder) is a disease that often begins early in adolescence. It happens to children of any race, socio-economic group, or gender, and 3% of the adolescent population will develop an addiction.

Parents need to watch closely for signs of substance use very early in adolescence. *Teens may hide their feelings of anxiety or depression due to stress and peer pressures and begin to self-medicate.* They will lie about their drug and alcohol use.

HIGH RISK FACTORS

1) Depression & anxiety 2) Insomnia 3) Trauma 4) Genetic Susceptibility

- Research shows that the human brain continues developing until age 25 when the prefrontal lobe is fully developed. Adolescent drug and alcohol use disrupt social and emotional development, impacting their ability to cope with stress and problem-solve in adulthood.
- There is no “safe” experimentation phase for teens who are genetically predisposed to addiction. If there is known addiction in your family, then substance use prevention must be openly acknowledged and discussed before a teen uses drugs or drinks alcohol for the first time.
- Adolescents and teens who experiment with drugs are significantly more likely to develop addictions than those who start drinking or using drugs recreationally as young adults.

WARNINGS

- Teens believe prescription drugs are safe. **Illicit drugs are made to mimic prescription drugs.**
- Drug cartels add fentanyl, a synthetic opiate mixed with many illicit drugs to make them more potent and addictive. **Fentanyl is 50-100 times more potent than morphine. Just a few grains of fentanyl are lethal.** Kids succumbing to fentanyl poisoning die accidentally because they took illicit drugs without knowing they are laced with fentanyl. A dealer may supply fentanyl-laced pills to several kids in a given social group, which, in turn, can result in multiple fentanyl poisonings in the same teen group.
- Teen may steal drugs from parents’ medicine and liquor cabinets to share with friends.
- At “Skittle parties” teens share prescription pills in combinations with other drugs and alcohol causing overdose.
- Overdoses occur when teens take them in combinations and/or excess dosages.
- Teens may use creative means to acquire drugs, using their peer network to obtain illicit street drugs. Apps such as WhatsApp or Snapchat are commonly used to purchase drugs.

WATCH FOR SIGNS OF SUBSTANCE USE AND OPIOID USE DISORDER

- Changes in school performance, motivation, social involvement, friends outside their usual social circle or disregard for curfews
- Money, medications, or valuables in your home “disappearing”
- Uncharacteristic, ongoing mood swings and/or emotional outbursts, depression, or anxiety
- Lethargy, weight loss, frequent sick days for nausea, stomach cramps, headaches, bloodshot or dilated or pinned eyes, skin infections and rashes, tremors, or insomnia

MYTHS ABOUT SUBSTANCE USE AND OPIOID USE

- Often when parents notice their teen is misusing drugs or alcohol, they believe they will “grow out of it.” This is not true! Parents often believe teens have a “safe” experimentation phase. Not true! The very first drink or “high” is dangerous.

GET HELP! BE PROACTIVE

- **Do not attempt to handle your child’s substance abuse alone!** There are support groups for parents of teens with substance use disorders and treatment services available for youth.
- **Speak openly about your concerns with your physicians, your social network and school community.** Have open discussions about drug and alcohol use with your teen, explaining the dangers of overdose and addiction for themselves and community. Parents should report to each other any drug or alcohol abuse incidents they may have learned about.
- **Curtail the spread of early drug and alcohol use**
Get to know the parents in your teen’s social circle and get their phone numbers. Keep track of whom your teen is texting and calling, and check for unknown callers. Monitor their cell phone bill. If any drug or alcohol abuse is suspected, monitor your teen’s social activities and whereabouts, and don’t give them a lot of cash or ATM or credit cards. Buy home drug test kits from pharmacies so that you may drug test immediately if you are suspicious or have cause for concern.
- **Get NARCAN (Naloxone)** to reverse an opioid overdose. (It might take two kits) Opioid Use Disorder is a serious medical condition that must be treated. Lock up controlled substances.

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

* **GET NARCAN** kits with training of how to dispense <https://nextdistro.org/california#naloxone-finder>

* **LOCK UP YOUR MEDS** Order prescription medicine lock boxes online through Walmart, Kaiser Pharmacy, Amazon, for \$12. **Dispose** of old prescriptions at Walgreens drop boxes.

* **FIND** treatment in Santa Clara County. <https://www.sccgov.org/sites/bhd/info/suts-resources-info>
Youth Services 408 272-6518 or after hours 800 488-9919

* **MENTAL HEALTH HELP:** call **SAMHSA** (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) 24 hours/7 <https://www.samhsa.gov/families>

* **SHOW TEENS** www.abovetheinfluence.com **ADD this CRISIS TEXT LINE on your teen’s phone for their use.** Text ABOVE to 741-741 for 24/7, anonymous, free instant crisis counseling for depression, drug abuse concerns or even suicide via the Text Line.

* **READ ABOUT OPIOIDS AND OTHER DRUGS :** <https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov>

* **NAR ANON, free Thursday night, 12 step PARENT** family recovery meeting- ZOOM link: 669-900-9128 ID 864-9903-4930 PW 4242 It will return to Good Samaritan Mission Oaks. For additional information call Louise (408) 313-6596