

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 14 • December 2020

The Holidays are Here

We are moving into the holiday season and faced with finding safe ways to connect with family and friends. With COVID-19 still in our lives, resiliency is necessary. As we celebrate, let's remember the message of hope and gratitude. Let's find ways to be of service to those in our communities that may need help, and to our friends and our families.

Interview with Helen Tosh: Community Services Coordinator

Making a Difference

Every issue we feature stories of individuals and agencies that are making a difference in their communities during this time of COVID-19. This week we are featuring our Prevention Services team member, Helen Tosh, who is working to address cannabis and vaping policies for Substance Use Services - Prevention.

How did you get interested in the field of Public Health and Policy?

Helen: I got interested in policy work when I began working in Public Health on tobacco policy. I have worked in the field of public policy for the past four years. This was new to me and interesting. I became interested in how one can affect changes in the county through policy, and I learned how to think about things from a public health perspective -- how you can make important changes that impact people's lives.

Tell us about your work in Prevention Services?

Helen: I work on our Prevention Services vaping and cannabis initiatives. I monitor changes in population behavior concerning these issues. I help people understand the impact vaping and cannabis can have on health for the individual and society.

What is your passion for working in the community?

Helen: My passion is educating people about vaping and cannabis. In the times we are going through now, people young and old can

turn to these habits out of boredom and depression. We need to make sure the public is informed about the consequences of vaping and cannabis, whether it be on them personally or those around them. Through data and research, we can demonstrate the effects, which helps inform people on how to make better decisions for their families and communities. I enjoy teaching people how to advocate for health policy. I enjoy giving vaping presentations in the community and educating people.

What are the areas that you hope to make changes in?

Helen: I am passionate about best practices in the field of cannabis policy. I am interested in discussions about policies that best protect the public and children. I am also interested in vaping policies and smoke-free multi-unit housing policies. During this time of COVID-19, vaping has increased due to stress and boredom, and policy to protect health is important. As a VCBH team member, I can listen to what the community sees as priorities around vaping and smoking, and then help plan the steps needed to be taken to improve these circumstances.

Tell us one thing about you that helps us get to know you better?

Helen: I like my work. I also love animals. I've always been partial to reptiles and have a tortoise I take care of. I have one dog and hope to have many more in the future. I enjoy the outdoors and want to improve my hiking skills.

If you could give words of inspiration during this time, what would it be?

Helen: Hold on. This too shall pass.

Thank you, Helen for sharing your experience with us.

**Spotlight:
Ventura County Limits**

**Updated Web Portal
for Community Health Promotion**



Check out our updated Ventura County Limits website at www.venturacountylimits.org

This website includes an overview of Mental Health and Substance Use prevention resources in the community.

The Mental Health portions offer stigma and discrimination reduction programs to help reduce negative attitudes, beliefs, and discrimination against those with mental illness or seeking mental health services and increase dignity and equality for individuals with mental illness and their families. Suicide Prevention programs provide resources to prevent suicide because of mental illness, and how to effectively engage and assist those at risk for self-harm.

Substance Use Services - Prevention works upstream to reduce alcohol and drug-related problems in our community. Initiatives are aimed at limiting impaired driving; underage and binge drinking; and negative impacts of marijuana and vaping, especially as it relates to youth; prescription drug abuse; and addressing health disparities among vulnerable populations. A primary goal is to delay the onset of first use of alcohol and or other drugs by youth.

Bookmark this [portal](#) to keep it accessible as a reference.

Featured Campaign: Vaping Historietas Secondhand Vaping



SECONDHAND VAPING Why Tiny Particles are a Big Problem



See our latest campaign about the risks of secondhand vaping. We developed this campaign to address the health risks related to vaping and how it can affect others, which is especially timely due to COVID-19. The historietas format shares the information through engaging short stories and highlights how vaping can affect children and other family members. The goal is to increase awareness that can lead to a safer home environment, especially for children who may be most vulnerable.

The Secondhand Vaping historietas are available as videos, PDFs and printed booklets. To view and share, see:

English videos: www.vapingfactcheckvc.org

Spanish videos: www.vapeoverificado.org

PDFs:

Substance Use Services Help is Available

Anyone can get addicted.

Sometimes the hardest thing to do is ask for help. For ourselves, or someone we know. People from all backgrounds can experience addiction. Addiction doesn't care how old you are, how much money you make, or the color of your skin; it has no bias. VCBH provides a continuum of care for substance use problems, with a wide range of treatment options for achieving and maintaining recovery. Ventura County ACCESS staff will help determine which treatment options are needed. We wanted to remind our community partners of the substance use services that we offer and how to reach us for help and information. We offer:

Outpatient Services

Counseling and therapeutic strategies

Residential Treatment

Residential care for rehabilitation services in a non-institutional setting

Withdrawal Management (Detox)

Intake, observation, medication services and discharge services

Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)

Case Management

Assistance in accessing medical, social, educational, vocational or other community services

Recovery Services

Ongoing aftercare support

Specialized programs for women, youth, and people who are justice-involved

If you or someone you know is struggling with addiction, call for a free, confidential assessment: 1-844-385-9200

Learn more:

Substance Use Services

vcbh.org/en/programs-services/substance-use-services



ACCESS LINE
1-844-385-9200
Toll-free • 24/7

Highlights of 2020

See some of our Highlights of 2020! In addition to grappling with COVID-19, sheltering in place, remote learning, and a year of civil unrest and political elections, we continued to address issues of substance use and mental health prevention in our community.

Social Determinants of Health Newsletter
www.healthequityvc.org/newsletters

New Ventura County Responds Website
www.venturacountyresponds.org

COAST Opioid Data Dashboard
www.coastventuracounty.org

Healthy Habits Campaign
habits.vcbh.org

Teens, Vaping & COVID-19 Campaign
www.vapingfactcheckvc.org/news/teens-vaping-covid-19

Preventing Overdose & Fentanyl Campaign
www.venturacountyresponds.org/preventing-overdose/opioids



THE OPIOID CRISIS: VENTURA COUNTY RESPONDS

In Ventura County, **nearly 100 people die every year from opioid overdoses.** Prescription painkiller abuse, rising heroin use, and accidental opioid overdoses are part of a **national crisis.** Learn the signs of overdose and how to **take action.**

<p>548 Opioid-Related Deaths 2016-19</p>	<p>820 Lives Lost from Heroin 2016-19</p>	<p>1,731 Times Heroin Used by First Responders 2015-19</p>	<p>Ventura County Launches Opioid Data Dashboard</p> <p>Local agencies are working together to reduce illicit opioid supply, decrease opioid demand, and save lives.</p> <p>Learn more →</p>
<p>469,527 Prescriptions for Opioids 2018</p>	<p>35 Average Number of Opioid Pills Dispensed per Resident</p>	<p>Prescription painkiller and heroin abuse, further compounded by a recent influx of illegal fentanyl, has created a public health crisis throughout our community.</p>	

INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Please follow the links below to see helpful information and resources.

<p>Community Members</p> <p>Learn about preventing overdose, getting help with addiction, medication safety at home, and safe medication disposal.</p> <p>→</p>	<p>Prescribers</p> <p>Sign up for CURES 2.0, download our Safe Prescribing Toolkit, and see upcoming Training & Events.</p> <p>→</p>	<p>Partners</p> <p>See the county data dashboard and learn how we can work together to reduce opioid supply, reduce opioid demand, and save lives.</p> <p>→</p>
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DID YOU KNOW

that our community is AT RISK from fentanyl?

Anyone who takes a drug that isn't prescribed for them may accidentally take fentanyl.

- Our local opioid epidemic has been worsened by a recent influx of illegal fentanyl, which is sometimes mixed in with other drugs.
- If your doctor didn't prescribe medication for you or a family member, there's no way to know what's really inside a pill.
- Fentanyl is so strong that even a tiny amount can lead to overdose and death for people of any age.

Did you know that you could save a life with an Overdose Rescue Kit?

Call 1-805-667-6663. It's confidential and free.



LEARN MORE:
www.VenturaCountyResponds.org





548

Opioid-related Deaths
2016-19



820

Lives Saved with Naloxone
2014-19



1,731

Times Naloxone Used by
First Responders 2015-2019



469,527

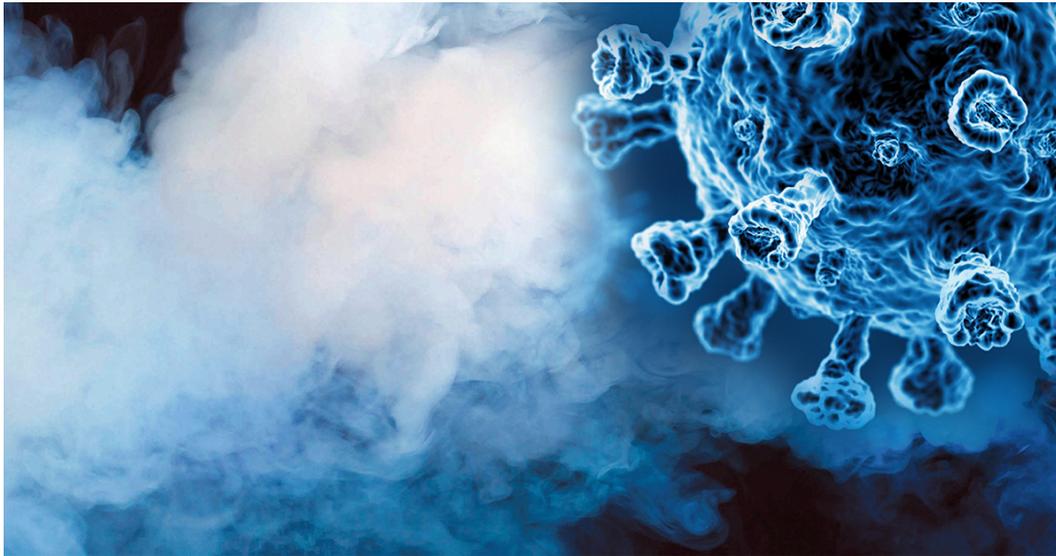
Prescriptions for Opioids
2018



35

Average Number of Opioid
Pills Dispensed per Resident

Prescription painkiller
and heroin abuse,
further compounded
by a recent influx of
illegal fentanyl, has
created a public health
crisis throughout our
community.



Teens

who take prescription opioids,
such as after removal of
wisdom teeth,
have a

33%
higher risk

of opioid misuse later in life.



“Dentists

play a pivotal role and have
a professional responsibility to
reduce the misuse
and abuse of
opioids...”

– CALIFORNIA DENTAL
ASSOCIATION

“One in 16

prescribed opioids after a surgical
procedure will become a

long-term user.”

– INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
ORAL & MAXILLOFACIAL SURGERY

DENTAL
PRESCRIBING
TOOLKIT

Free online resources:
venturacountyresponds.org/dental



5 days
of opioid use can lead to
dependence.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 13 • November 2020



Autumn is here

The cool autumn air and changing leaves give us a break from the heat of the summer and the fires. As our county opens, communities depend on our agencies for mental health services, substance use treatment, naloxone distribution, food share donations, housing assistance, vaccination clinics and more. We continue to serve those in our community who may need our help. Read about our many campaigns and projects and ways that you can stay involved.

Message from Alma: Finding a New Way

Sharing Gratitude

Everyday life has changed for me. Grocery shopping is not the same, getting a haircut, a manicure or even a doctor's appointment takes much planning and research now. I can't help but think that if I am having such a hard time adapting to all these changes, it must be even more challenging for other members of our community."

Promoting Health Equity

Issue 6 • October 2020



Quote of the Month

"We can't dismantle the systemic conditions overnight that put communities of color at risk. But, together, we can make immediate changes that will support communities as they protect themselves, their families and their neighbors."

— Public Health Institute

Featured Resource: Public Health Institute

Measuring the Impacts

"The State of California took an important step this week in acknowledging the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in Black, Latinx, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander and Indigenous communities by introducing a health equity metric into its COVID-19 reopening measurements. The State will use the California Healthy Places Index (HPI) tool, as part of its new Blueprint Health Equity Metric."

— Mary A. Pittman, DrPH, CEO and President

Helpful Resources

If you are looking for resources in the community, check out our websites. We continually add news, tips, latest research, blogs, publications and more.

Need Help?

If you or a family member are struggling with addiction, talk to your healthcare provider or call the confidential 24/7 Access Line: 1-844-385-9200.

> [Learn about Substance Use Treatment Services.](#)

About Us

Supporting Health – Preventing Harm

Prevention Services works upstream to reduce alcohol and drug-related problems in our community. Initiatives are aimed at limiting harms related to impaired driving; underage and binge drinking; marijuana and vaping, especially as it relates to harms to youth; prescription drug abuse; and addressing health disparities among vulnerable populations.

A primary goal is to delay the onset of first use of alcohol and or other drugs by youth. We collaborate with schools, parent groups, government agencies, medical partners, law enforcement, community-based organizations and more.

Contact Us

Erika Fernandez
Erika.Fernandez@ventura.org

Alma Ixta
Alma.Ixta@ventura.org

Share your stories with us. Want us to feature you and your work in the community? Send an email to Erika!

Photo: Alma Ixta and Erika Fernandez, Community Services Coordinators, pre-COVID-19.



STAY CONNECTED

