

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 15 • January 2021

It's a New Year



Our newsletters are one way we stay connected to you. We have updated our websites and continue to add campaigns, publications, events and more, in hopes that you can bring back our Prevention messages to your agencies and communities. Alma and Erika, our Community Outreach staff, will continue to be in touch with you and we are working with our partners to share our work and efforts, despite the challenges we are all facing. Please continue to reach out to us, share your photos, Zoom meetings webinars and stories on how you are adapting and prospering in your communities. It is a new year ahead with hope and promise!

Message from Erika: Welcoming a New Baby during COVID-19

Postpartum care is important because new moms are at risk of serious physical and mental health complications in the days and weeks after giving birth. Postpartum care can be difficult, stressful, and overwhelming under normal circumstances. Not getting enough sleep, physical discomfort, and



nursing a newborn can exhaust new mothers; adding a pandemic, safety precautions, health fears, and social distancing can make the postpartum period even more difficult.

When I gave birth on July 19th at VCMC they had different rules and protocols for COVID-19 such as, no visitors, wearing a mask at all times during labor and delivery, and limiting the times your support person can visit. At home we were unable to have visitors. I was fortunate to have support but as I cared for my the baby and other two children, I feared for our health and being exposed to the virus from family members. The baby and I got sick for several days and to top it off, all the kids were scheduled to start distance learning from home. I didn't have enough time to sleep, cook, clean, shower, eat healthy, exercise, think, or even breathe. I told myself that I had great coping skills and everything was fine.

During my 6-week follow-up, my doctor had me answer some questions on a survey for anxiety and depression. I was tired and worried that one of us would get COVID and that I would not be able to help my kids with their school work. I had withdrawn myself from family and friends; but I thought it was normal to feel this way. When the doctor looked at the survey, he said I might be experiencing some postpartum depression or anxiety. I was shocked. I realized right away that I needed to stop and fit some time to take care of me.

Life changes can sometimes turn our lives upside down and push us over our limits or comfort zone, especially during a time like this. It is so important to build healthy habits, have good coping skills, and ask for help, which is what I did. I did schedule time with a counselor and slowly started to make time to care for myself in order to care for my family.

I am grateful for the support and guidance I received to be the best parent and enjoy being a new mom.

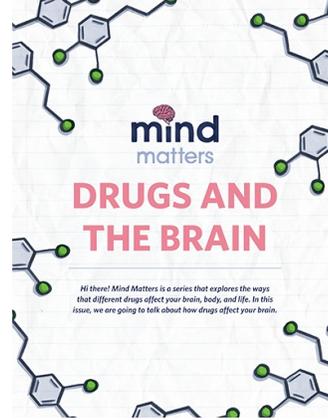
– Erika Fernandez, Community Services Coordinator

Featured Resource for Teachers: Mind Matters Series

Helping Students Learn about Drug Risks

“Mind Matters” includes engaging printed materials designed to help students in grades 5 - 8 understand the biological effects of drug misuse on the brain and body, along with identifying how these drug-induced changes affect both behaviors and emotions.

There is no more important time to address these issues with adolescents than in the middle school years, when they are forming opinions about the health risks of drugs. These educational materials are also easy to print and use. There is an accompanying Teacher's Guide which includes background information and activities to enhance students' learning.



Learn more:

Mind Matters Series, National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
teens.drugabuse.gov/teachers/mind-matters

Featured Resource: Why Does NIDA Study Addiction in Teens?

Coping with Addiction during COVID-19

The actor Brandon Thomas Lee recently sat down with the NIDA's Director, Dr. Nora Volkow, for a virtual conversation about addiction, recovery, mental health, and how COVID-19 affects it all. One of Brandon's questions was, "NIDA does a lot of research focused on teenage/young adult drug use in particular—why is that?" Watch her answer:

The teen brain is like a computer program that's still being coded. Because it's developing, it's more vulnerable than the adult brain to changes caused by drug use.

See the interview:

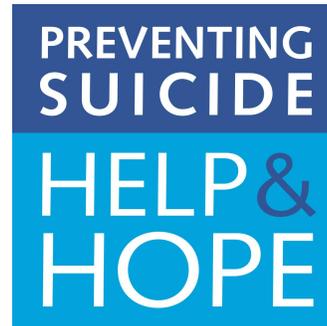


Reflections: 5th Annual Preventing Suicide: Help & Hope Conference - A Review

Making a Difference

Review by Erika Fernandez

The 5th Annual Preventing Suicide: Help & Hope Conference was held on December 10 and it was a success. The conference was a good reminder that we can all help prevent suicide. Keynote Speaker Pablo Campos from Active Minds shared his story about struggling with depression and addiction, which led to an attempt to take his own life during his senior year of high school. The second part of the conference offered QPR Suicide Prevention Training; additionally, Spanish translation services were offered.



Pablo Campos shared an inspiring story of his challenges in his road to recovery and talked about how stigma, cultural norms, and lack of education affected him and his recovery process. He discussed important obstacles many struggle with when dealing with a mental illness and addiction; growing up without any discussion of or education on mental health, having to juggle the norms of two cultures, and lacking healthy coping skills. Pablo shared about not understanding why he had feelings of anger and frustration and of being unsure how to cope. He talked about how stigma and a lack of education made seeking help more difficult, but by finally finding a strong network of professionals and loved ones, he was able to grow from being his own worst enemy to a powerful participant in his recovery.

The QPR training is a great educational resource that teaches you how to recognize the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to question, persuade, and refer someone to help. The program is designed to teach the warning signs of a suicide crisis and how to respond; it is designed to increase the chance of survival in the event of a crisis. QPR stands for Question, Persuade, and Refer. The mission for QPR is to reduce suicidal behaviors and save lives by providing innovative, practical and proven suicide prevention training.

Accessing Resources

Suicide is a tragic reaction to severe distress or feelings of hopelessness in one's life. Thoughts of suicide do not necessarily mean that you want to die. Instead they mean that you have more pain than you can cope with right now. However, suicidal thoughts do not have to become suicidal actions. It's important to know that suicide can be preventable. Whether you are

considering ending your life, or know someone who feels suicidal, learn to recognize the warning signs and how to get immediate help. You may save a life - your own or someone else's.

Learn more:

Suicide Can Be Prevented, Wellness Every Day

<https://www.wellnesseveryday.org/preventing-suicide>

Featured Campaign: Building Healthy Habits

Take Time to Take Care of Yourself

These have been uncertain and stressful times for many of us, which can lead to unhealthy choices. It's important during times like these to take time to take care of yourself. Learn about the risks of substance use and mental health issues during this time, and when and how to seek help for yourself or loved ones. Take time to build healthy habits.

See the campaigns:

habits.vcbh.org

habitos.vcbh.org





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.

Ventura County Limits
www.venturacountylimits.org

Ventura County Responds
venturacountyresponds.org

Marijuana FactCheck
www.mjfactcheck.org

Vaping FactCheck
www.vapingfactcheckvc.org

Social Determinants of Health
www.healthequityvc.org

Wellness Every Day
www.wellnesseveryday.org/news

Follow us on Social Media
www.facebook.com/venturacountylimits
twitter.com/vclimits

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](#)

Events & Webinars

We will keep you posted on upcoming events in each newsletter. If your agency is planning any online meetings, please send us the information so we can post it.

- **Multi-Unit Housing Taskforce Meeting**

1/14/21, 11:00 am

Contact: Shar.Busch@Ventura.org, (805)981-6644

- **Hookah: Truths, Myths, and Options for Local Governments**

Webinar, 1/15/21, 11:00 am, Pacific Time

This webinar will discuss the challenges with enforcement created by hookah exemptions in flavor restrictions.

[Register here](#)

Learn more:

[California Commercial Tobacco Control, Public Health Law Center](#)

- **VC-ASH (Ventura County Action on Smoking & Health) Meeting**

1/21/21, 10:00 am, Pacific Time

Contact: Vicky.Gonzales@Ventura.org, (805)981-6656

- **Creating Healthy Environments with Language Justice**

Webinar, 1/26/21, 3:00 pm, Eastern Time

This webinar features three guests who will share a variety of experiences, perspectives, and insights around how language intersects with their efforts to improve health and equity.

[Register here](#)

Learn more:

[County Health Rankings & Roadmaps](#)

- **Suicide Prevention 101 for Parents: Recognizing Signs and What to Do**

Webinar, 1/27/21, 5:00 pm, Pacific Time

The webinar is provided in partnership by the California Department of Education, the Directing Change Program, and Teen Line.

[Register here](#)

Got Photos?

Send us your photos of Ventura County scenes and we'll share in future newsletters. As the county continues to adapt, we want to capture the changing landscape of our communities. We will give you credit too!

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

