

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 18 • April 2021



#VaccineReady | **April 2021**

National Minority Health Month 2021

April is National Minority Health Month, and this year, the HHS Office of Minority Health (OMH) is focusing on the disproportionate impact the COVID-19 pandemic is having on racial and ethnic minority and American Indian and Alaska Native communities and underscore the need for these vulnerable communities to get vaccinated as more vaccines become

available.

This year's theme for National Minority Health Month is #VaccineReady. The focus will be to empower communities to get the facts about COVID-19 vaccines, share accurate vaccine information, participate in clinical trials, get vaccinated when the time comes and practice COVID-19 safety measures.

Learn more:

Office of Minority Health

[National Minority Health Month](#)

NAMIWalks Your Way Ventura County

Join us for a United Day of Hope

Our NAMIWalks event will be a little different than what you might expect from a walk event— while



making a lot of difference. It's going to be “your way,” meaning you choose what you want to do on event day. Our collective mental health needs are at their greatest now. One in three U.S. adults reported experiencing depression or anxiety since the pandemic began. NAMI's programs and advocacy are needed more than ever, and with your help, we are pleased to present NAMIWalks Your Way on Saturday, May 22, 2021.

What is NAMIWalks Your Way?

On May 22, 2021, NAMIWalks will be a virtually virtual experience, united with NAMIWalks across the country. NAMIWalks Your Way means instead of putting one foot in front of the other, you get to put one feat in front of the other: participants get to use their creativity, with the main rule that we continue to advance towards our goal by leaps and bounds. The choice is yours on how you want to make this spring's event fit into this spring's reality.

We will have two team captains from VCBH, Esperanza Mata and Vince Franco.

[Join Our Team](#)

[Support Me](#)

Message from Erika:

Spring Break and Staying Safe

Deciding what to do this spring break with my children hard. We usually take a vacation to Mexico every year and having to cancel

again was devastating for them. They are eager to go back to their normal activities, but I decided that it was best not to travel.

Although spring break wasn't what they wanted, I made it different than their normal routine. I let them stay up late and we watched movies and had special snacks. I planned a road trip to San Diego, went to a pancake house, walked on the beach, and had a picnic lunch. For Easter holiday I rented a jolly jumper for a day. The kids enjoyed spring break and we stayed safe.

As more and more people get vaccinated, the county is slowly going back to normal. Businesses are starting to open again and plans to have our children go back to in person learning are being set. After a year of change, quarantine, and restrictions, we are all excited to return to our normal lives. However, we cannot forget about our safety protocols. There is still a portion of people who are not eligible for a vaccine and even with a vaccine, you can still get COVID-19. The best protection is avoiding crowds, wearing a mask, staying 6 feet apart, washing hands and getting the vaccine. It is important to continue to follow these recommendations so we can all stay healthy.

Learn more:

www.venturacountyrecovers.org



National Prescription Drug Take Back Day April 24, 10am - 2pm

Ventura County is committed to preventing prescription drug misuse and abuse. One of the ways the county works to address the issue locally is by reducing access, especially to teens.

The Ventura County Sheriff's Office in collaboration with Ventura County Behavioral Health established a countywide Rx disposal program that allows residents to safely dispose of unused,

unwanted, or expired Rx medication via secure, confidential disposal bins. Over the last several years, this has expanded to other jurisdictions and retail pharmacies.

The DEA's Take Back Day supports efforts to prevent drug addiction and overdose deaths. It encourages people to dispose of prescription drugs while also educating the public about the potential for abuse of medications.

What You Can Do

- Commit to safely disposing of your prescription drugs
- Get the facts on Rx & OTC drug abuse
- Dispel the myth that Rx drugs are safe to abuse
- Know the signs and symptoms of drug use
- Monitor and secure all medications

Learn more:

[Medication Disposal Drop-off Locations](#)

DEA Take Back Day

takebackday.dea.gov

April is Alcohol Awareness Month

April is Alcohol Awareness Month. We wanted to raise awareness of the risks of alcohol use since COVID-19 and some resources to learn more. This is a great opportunity to have conversations about alcohol and other drugs with your kids.

In the News: Alcohol perils increase for young adults during COVID, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), March 24, 2021



Talking to Kids About Alcohol and Other Drugs: 5 Conversation Goals

Research suggests that one of the most important factors in healthy child development is a strong, open relationship with a parent. It is important to start talking to your children about alcohol and other drugs before they are exposed to them—as early as 9 years old.

Young people are more likely to listen when they know you're on their side. Reinforce why you don't want your child to drink or use other drugs—because you want your child to be happy and safe. The conversation will go a lot better if you're open and you show concern.

1 Show you disapprove of underage drinking and other drug misuse.

Over 80 percent of young people ages 10–18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision whether to drink. Send a clear and strong message that you disapprove of underage drinking and use or misuse of other drugs.

2 Show you care about your child's health, wellness, and success.

3 Show you're a good source of information about alcohol and other drugs.

You want your child to make informed decisions about alcohol and other drugs with reliable information about its dangers. You don't want your child to learn about alcohol and other drugs from unreliable sources. Establish yourself as a trustworthy source of information.



www.underageposting.samhsa.gov

- Alcohol remains a danger to college students during the on-going pandemic. College students are flocking to Spring Break destinations, raising the prospect of large crowds and underage and harmful drinking, and concerns for additional alcohol-related tragedies as well as for increased transmission of the novel coronavirus.
- In the COVID-19 era, young adults - including those of college age - are facing unprecedented stressors. Uncertainty about the future, lost income and social isolation can lead to uncomfortable conditions, such as loneliness, anxiety and depression. Alcohol misuse often accompanies and worsens these conditions. Research conducted early during the COVID pandemic has linked

increased drinking to coping with stress, and researchers are concerned that a potential spike in alcohol use disorder (AUD) could be a consequence.

- “Before the pandemic, young people were engaging in significant alcohol misuse,” says Dr. George F. Koob, director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, part of the National Institutes of Health. “Our concern is that these numbers could increase for young people during the pandemic. We must continue to encourage college students to take the appropriate measures to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus and ensure that they have the tools, support, and strategies needed to cope with stress and avoid alcohol misuse.”

Source: [Alcohol perils increase for young adults during COVID](#), NIAAA

Learn more:

Tips for Talking With Your Kids

habits.vcbh.org/kids

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)

www.niaaa.nih.gov

Rethinking Drinking

www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov

"Talk. They Hear You" Underage Drinking Prevention Campaign

- www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking/parent-resources/five-conversation-goals
- [Download Talking to Kids About Alcohol and Other Drugs: 5 Conversation Goals](#)

Webinar Review: Cannabis - People before Profits, The Evolution of Cannabis Policies and Where Prevention Fits In

Review by Erika Fernandez, SUS Prevention Services

The webinar *Cannabis: People before Profits, The Evolution of Cannabis Policies and Where Prevention Fits In* was held on February 16 and hosted by the Pacific Southwest Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network (PTTC). The webinar included an overview of marijuana legalization laws and policy, the importance of prevention practitioners role in identifying public health issues emerging from commercialization and legalization policies, the intersection of policy and prevention and how we approach prevention in the era of commercialized cannabis.

Scott Gagnon, Director of the New England Prevention Technology Transfer Center (PTTC), reviewed the three stages of legalization: campaigns, implementation, and post-implementation changes. He stated that what is missing or understated in the public conversation about cannabis policy is addiction, the impact on health and the community, social costs, and impairment. It is critical for prevention professionals to understand cannabis laws in their states and look for provisions that will impact risk and protective factors.

He offered thought-provoking questions on what is happening in our communities in the era of legal cannabis. He encouraged us to ask how cannabis consumption is changing our community, who is consuming cannabis, and how the impact of adult use is affecting others. He reviewed evidence-based practices for cannabis prevention and young adults.

This webinar was extremely useful because as a Community Services Coordinator in VCBH SUS-Prevention, I am responsible for educating the community on the harmful effects of marijuana use in teens. Learning about the stages of marijuana legalization and the multiple layers of marijuana policy regarding prevention helps to develop strategies for education and outreach in the community.

Learn more:

Pacific Southwest PTTC

[View Webinar](#)

[Webinar Slides](#)

Event Review: "Marijuana: What You Need to Know"

Educating Parents & Youth

*Review by Erika Fernandez, SUS
Prevention Services*



The "Marijuana: What You Need to Know," event was virtually held on March 23rd. This was hosted by the Conejo Valley Unified School District BreakThrough Student Assistance Program and The Conejo Schools Foundation. Presentations were given by professionals from Los Robles Regional Medical Center, Ventura County Behavioral Health, and Thousand Oaks Police Department. Spanish translation services were offered.

Topics covered were the potency of cannabis, social influence and access for teens, and marijuana addiction. Research on marijuana trends and potential risk factors associated with early adolescent

use of marijuana and how it affects the developing brain was presented. Research shows an increasing approval of marijuana legalization and increased access to marijuana by 12th graders.

Senior Deputy Rob Brady presented on marijuana in the community. Deputy Brady oversees the School Resource Officers in Ventura County. He gave a list of common street names used for marijuana and talked about how it is used. Deputy Brady went over the symptoms of consuming high level of edibles, common myths of marijuana, and the effects of marijuana.

I presented on tips for parents, reviewing the signs that your child is using marijuana. I shared photos of paraphernalia and how to be aware of your child's social media, monitor online shopping, friends, and school grades. I provided tips on how to start the conversation about marijuana use and offered resources in the county for accessing help.

[See presentation](#)

Learn more:

Marijuana FactCheck

www.mjfactcheck.org

Calendar

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.

Health Disparities Roundtable: Disparities in COVID-19 – Social Justice, Policy, and Ethical Considerations in Vaccinating the U.S. Population

4/16/2021 7:00am-8:30am CDT

The Health Equity Work Group at the UMN School of Public Health

Register

[Register](#)

Baby Boomers & Substance Use: How Holistic Care Can Help

4/28/21, 12:00pm-1:30pm PDT

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals

[Register](#)

Preventing Adolescent Depression: Introduction to the Blues Program in the Context of COVID-19

4/29/21, 11:00am-12:30pm PDT

Northwest PTTC

[Register](#)

Alcohol Prevention is Suicide Prevention: Understanding the Associations Between Alcohol and Suicide

5/5/21, 10:00am-11:00am CDT

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

This website is a portal to help learn about our efforts to address substance use challenges in our communities.

www.venturacountylimits.org

Ventura County Responds

This website tracks what is being done in Ventura County to address the opioid crisis and provides the latest information for prescribers and community members.

venturacountyresponds.org

Marijuana FactCheck

See the latest findings and research related to cannabis and our kid's health.

www.mjfactcheck.org

Vaping FactCheck

Learn about the risks of vaping and the impact on teens. Keep informed about the latest research and news.

www.vapingfactcheckvc.org

Social Determinants of Health

The Social Determinants of Health website provides resources, news, and features community agencies or “Drivers of Change” who are working to building healthier communities through individual, organizational and community wide effort and engagement.

www.healthequityvc.org

Ventura County Behavioral Health

The Ventura County Behavioral Health Department (VCBH) provides mental health and substance use treatment services. Learn about our services and how to access help.

vcbh.org

About Us

Supporting Health – Preventing Harm

Substance Use 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

Photo credit: Children playing soccer again, Oxnard. Photo by Erika Fernandez.

Photo: Alma Ixta and Erika Fernandez pre-COVID-19.



STAY CONNECTED

