



MOUNTAIN PLAINS
RURAL OPIOID TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 2024

IN THIS EDITION:

Back to School - Resources
for Students and Young
Adults

The Autumnal Years -
Resources for Older
Adults

Member Spotlight:
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Awareness Events

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

○ The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) acknowledges that its office in Boulder, Colorado, is located on the unceded territories and ancestral homelands of the Hinóno'etí (Arapaho), Tsistsistas (Cheyenne), and Nuciu (Ute) nations. Through this land acknowledgment, WICHE aims to raise awareness about the region's shared and often painful history while honoring the Indigenous histories, perspectives, and experiences that have often been suppressed or forgotten then and now. WICHE respects and thanks the elders and peoples, both past and present, of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Ute, and many other Native nations, who are the original stewards of this land and custodians of Indigenous knowledge and practice.

The sacrifices, hardships, and resilience of the many Indigenous peoples across the West inform our present and future, and therefore WICHE is committed to using its capacity and resources to partner with these communities and provide understanding and solutions to the critical issues they face.

For more information, please visit: [land acknowledgment - WICHE](#)



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Utah Communities Host “A Light to Remember” on International Overdose Awareness Day

On Saturday, August 31st, nine Utah communities across the state hosted the 6th annual A Light to Remember event, marking International Overdose Awareness Day with events that shared education, harm reduction, treatment and recovery resources, and stories of hope and healing. The events ended at 9pm with a shared moment of silence and luminary display to remember those lost to overdose.

[Read the entire article \(PDF\)](#) | alighttoremember.life

Students can learn how the body and brain respond to specific drugs through NIDA's Mind Matters series.

Educational institutions can use NIDA's Teachers: Classroom Resources on Drug Effects.

SCHOOL-AGED KIDS

○ According to the National Association of School Nurses, "Schools are responsible for anticipating and preparing to respond to a variety of emergencies. The school nurse is often the first health professional who responds to an emergency in the school setting. The school nurse possesses the education and knowledge to identify emergent situations, manage the emergency until relieved by emergency medical services (EMS) personnel, communicate the assessment and interventions to EMS personnel, and follow up with the healthcare provider. Thus, school nurse access to naloxone as part of their school's emergency preparedness will improve opioid overdose response, response preparation, and harm reduction and avoid horrific outcomes such as death. With naloxone as part of an emergency protocol, a school nurse can quickly administer it to prevent overdose deaths by reversing life-threatening respiratory depression. Ensuring ready access to naloxone at schools aligns with one of the SAMSHA's five strategic approaches to prevent overdose deaths (SAMHSA, 2018)."

[School & Educator Resources](#) - SAMHSA

[Naloxboxes: Increasing Access to Naloxone](#)
- Overdose Lifeline

[Preventing and Reducing Youth and Young Adult Substance Misuse: Schools, Students, Families](#) - U.S. Department of Education

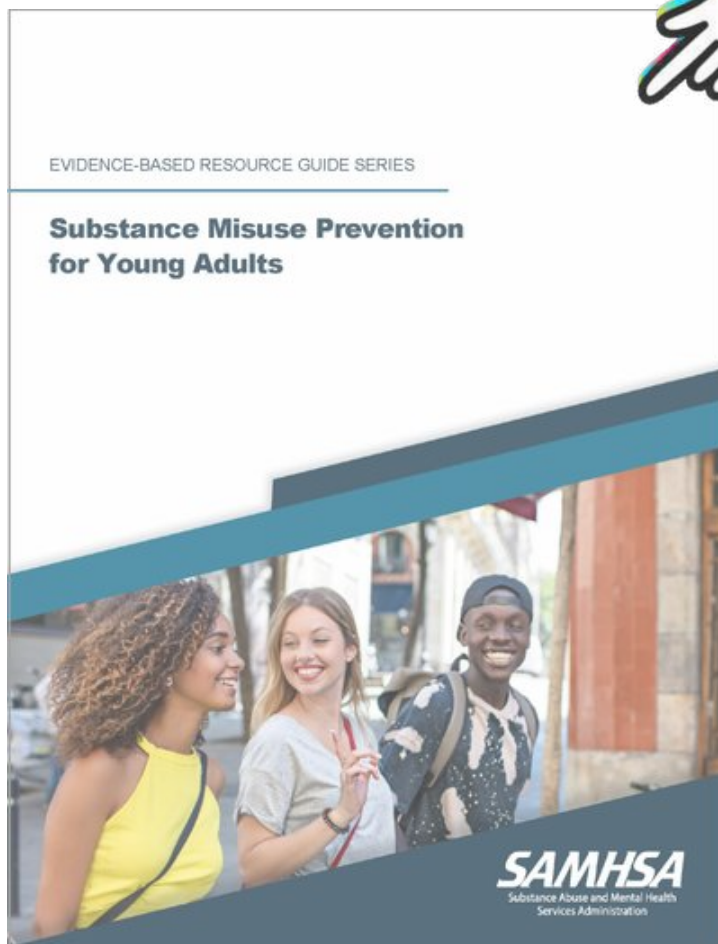


COLLEGE-AGED AND YOUNG ADULTS

○ The latest National Surveys on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH 2023) showed one in four (24.9%) of respondents aged 12 or older indicated illicit drug use in the past 12 months before the interview. This aligns with the understanding that many people start use in their adolescent and adult years.



○ Thankfully there are coalitions and resources for young adults and those in their lives, be they caregivers, educators, or providers. Common takeaways include the importance of prevention, and that caring adults can be a major protective factor. Check out this resource from SAMHSA.



OLDER ADULTS

- We know that as we age, many people experience multiple health issues often referred to as comorbidities.
- This can lead to multiple prescriptions, which can be difficult to manage for aging adults, their providers, and their caretakers.
- Unfortunately, not all prescribers are comfortable prescribing naloxone along with opioid prescriptions, even though that is an easy way to prevent accidental overdose.
- According to the Journal of Pain & Palliative Care Pharmacotherapy, "Naloxone is an underutilized antidote that could prevent many opioid overdose-related deaths." They also acknowledge that naloxone co-prescribing is "low and opportunities for program enhancement exist."



[Resources for Older Adults - SAMHSA](#)

[How to Improve Access to Mental Health and Substance Use Care for Older Adults - NCOA](#)

IN THE NEWS

HHS partners with Hazelden Betty Ford to offer addiction training for behavioral health workforce

North Dakota Health and Human Services

North Dakota Health and Human Services (HHS) is partnering with Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation to provide training in the newly updated American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Criteria to North Dakota behavioral health professionals. The ASAM Criteria are the most widely used clinical standards for identifying the treatment needs of patient with addiction and co-occurring conditions in the nation. The HHS training initiative, which began in July, aims to enhance the knowledge and expertise of professionals treating substance use disorder and mental health conditions across the state. It has been met with overwhelming demand, prompting the addition of several new training sessions through August.

"North Dakota is committed to strengthening our substance use treatment services by providing our professionals with the latest knowledge and tools," said James Knopik, manager of addiction and prevention program and policy at HHS. "Partnering with the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation allows us to bring their extensive expertise and proven methodologies to our state, ensuring our workforce is well-prepared to meet the needs of our communities."

Core Components of The ASAM Criteria



* Decision rules include the Dimensional Admission Criteria and the transition and continued service criteria.

ABOUT US

The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) has been strengthening higher education, workforce development, and behavioral health throughout the region since 1953. As an interstate compact, WICHE partners with states, territories, freely associated states, and postsecondary institutions in the West to share knowledge, create resources, and develop innovative solutions that address some of society's most pressing needs.

In 2022, WICHE was awarded a two-year grant from SAMHSA to establish the Mountain Plains Rural Opioid Technical Assistance Center (MP ROTAC). In 2024, SAMHSA awarded additional funding to WICHE to continue MP ROTAC projects for a third year (9/2024 - 9/2025). MP ROTAC is dedicated to supporting opioid and stimulant prevention, treatment, and recovery in HHS Region 8, comprised of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. MP ROTAC develops and disseminates resources, training, and technical assistance to rural communities across the continuum of care. In partnership with our Regional Advisory Workgroup, MP ROTAC's efforts aim to meet the needs of a wide variety of audiences that are not traditionally targeted by other training efforts. We look forward to serving you and making a difference in Region 8's rural communities!



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