

USU Extension Co-Hosts Opioid Summit

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USU HEALTH EXTENSION CO-HOSTS OPIOID SUMMIT

The first area of focus for HEART is on opioid misuse prevention and treatment. As a start for addressing this issue, an Opioid Health and Wellness Summit will be held August 1-2 at the Salt Lake Marriott Downtown at City Creek. The summit is co-hosted by USU Extension Health, the USU College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences,



the College of Education, and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and will provide an opportunity for stakeholders in Utah to come together to learn, network and collaborate on substance use disorder issues in the state.

The summit is designed for anyone working in the areas of opioid misuse prevention or treatment, including social workers, first responders, public officials, medical professionals, mental health professionals, educators and researchers, advocates, family members and people in recovery.

"Utah is, in many ways, an unusually healthy state," said Sandra Sulzer, USU Extension assistant professor of health and wellness. "We have some of the lowest rates of cancer in the nation and lower-than-average tobacco and alcohol use rates. Nonetheless, opioids have been a major issue."

Sulzer said that between 2000 and 2015, the state saw a 400 percent increase in deaths resulting from the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs. From 2013-2015, Utah ranked seventh in the nation for drug overdose deaths, the majority of which were opioid related.

"And some counties, such as Carbon and Emery, have rates well above that state average," she said. "This puts them among the hardest hit in the nation."

Ken White, USU Extension vice president, said USU Extension recently hired five new employees statewide

to implement a team approach under Health Extension to provide credible health and wellness resources. These professional practice assistant professors will be based in some of the communities hit hardest by the opioid crisis in Utah, including Davis, Weber, Cache, Box Elder, Salt Lake, Carbon, Emery, Tooele and Utah counties.

"With Extension offices serving every county in the state, we are in a perfect position to offer programs and support for all aspects of health," he said. "We are hopeful that through this summit, we can make a difference in the current opioid problem by providing an opportunity for interested parties to come together to learn and discuss potential solutions."

According to Carrie Durward, USU Extension nutrition specialist and summit coordinator, the summit includes keynote speakers, breakout sessions and workshops. Highlights include evidence-based best practices for opioid misuse prevention, treatment and harm reduction; programs and efforts in the state of Utah and around the country; and local networks that will provide opportunities for collaboration.

For registration information, visit extension.usu.edu/healthwellnesssummit/. For further summit information, contact Durward at carrie.durward@usu.edu or 435-797-5843.

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