

CDC Rx AWARENESS CAMPAIGN FACTSHEET

Educating Americans About the Risks of Prescription Opioids

From 1999 to 2018, more than 232,000 people in the United States died from overdoses involving prescription opioids.¹



The Need

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, along with other Federal agencies, made it a priority to raise awareness that prescription opioids can be addictive and dangerous. Vital to achieving this goal was the development of an evidence-based, audience-driven communications campaign that could resonate with those at risk for prescription opioid misuse and overdose.

The Approach

CDC's *Rx Awareness* campaign tells the stories of real people whose lives were impacted by prescription opioids. The goals of the campaign are to:

- Increase awareness that prescription opioids can be addictive and dangerous
- Lower prescription opioid misuse
- Increase the number of patients seeking nonopioid pain management options
- Increase awareness about recovery and reduce stigma

CDC developed a series of videos as the cornerstone of the campaign, featuring individuals living in recovery from opioid use disorder as well as family members who have lost someone to prescription opioid overdose. The testimonials provide compelling real-life accounts to help make others aware of the risks and dangers of prescription opioids.

The *Rx Awareness* campaign launched in 2017 with a focus on reaching people between the ages of 25 and 54 who have taken opioids at least once for medical or nonmedical reasons. This audience was determined based on surveillance data indicating that this age range had the highest fatality rate from opioid overdoses. In 2018, based on evaluation findings, the campaign began an effort to expand and include more stories that reflect audience segments within the 25–54 age range, including younger adults (25- to 34-year-olds), older adults (45- to 54-year-olds), pregnant women, veterans, and American Indians/Alaska Natives.

CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

DIGITAL

- 15- and 30-second testimonial videos
- Long-form testimonial videos
- Web banner ads
- Online search ads
- 6-second bumper video ads
- Social media ads

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE

- cdc.gov/RxAwareness

RADIO

- 30-second ads

OUT-OF-HOME

- Billboards
- Newspaper ads
- Postcards
- Posters



cdc.gov/RxAwareness



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

If you're struggling with prescription opioids, there is hope. Recovery is possible.



Research showed that campaign messages should evolve to be positive, empowering, and to instill hope. For this reason, new campaign materials were developed to include the message that recovery is possible.

Campaign Reach

In December 2016, CDC conducted a pilot that implemented the *Rx Awareness* campaign for 14 weeks in nine high-burden counties across four States. CDC based this placement on criteria such as reach, participants' readiness to implement a campaign, and level of interest. In 2017, the campaign launched in 16 additional counties across 4 States. During the summer of 2020, a new suite of campaign materials launched in select markets within Utah, West Virginia, New Mexico, and Alaska that include stories of people who reflect the priority audience segments.

The success of *Rx Awareness* depends on the efforts of State, local, and Tribal organizations that extend the reach of the campaign as part of their drug overdose prevention efforts. *Rx Awareness* was designed with these organizations in mind and includes ready-made and tested materials that CDC-funded partners can customize for local use.

Overall Findings

The *Rx Awareness* campaign has reached hundreds of millions of people across the country. Evaluation efforts showed that after seeing or hearing the campaign messages:

- Sixty-eight percent of people reported that they intend to ask their doctor for alternatives to prescription opioids, if needed
- Seventy-four percent of people reported that they plan to avoid prescription opioids medically and/or recreationally

Findings across these research efforts suggest that campaign messages have the potential to not only affect awareness and knowledge but also to influence actions.

MESSAGES WITH IMPACT

CDC surveyed audiences exposed to campaign messages; 83 to 89 percent found the ads effective. Audiences also thought the campaign was:

BELIEVABLE 84%

MEANINGFUL 78%

INFORMATIVE 78%

WORTH REMEMBERING 75%

CONVINCING 73%

This CDC public health effort includes many other materials, such as a campaign website, patient-centered resources, and provider tools available at cdc.gov/RxAwareness.

¹Wide-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research (WONDER). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2020. Reviewed February 26, 2020. Accessed July 15, 2020. <http://wonder.cdc.gov>