

Substance Use Disorders and Substance Misuse

(revised March 2018)

The New Hampshire Public Health Association (NHPHA) recognizes that substance use disorders are a chronic brain disease, and that substance misuse is a problem that negatively impacts individuals, families, and communities throughout New Hampshire.¹ Substance use disorders can be caused and influenced by a wide variety of factors, including, but not limited to: adverse childhood experiences,² genetic predisposition to substance misuse, environmental factors, mental health conditions, and access to health information and care.³ When left untreated, substance use disorders can cause serious, potentially life-threatening,⁴ health concerns for individuals and their families, as many substances have physical effects in addition to their behavioral effects.⁵ Additionally, communities without strong health systems to address substance use disorders may see economic burdens such as loss of productivity, absenteeism in the workplace, increase in health care costs, and increases in criminal justice costs.⁶ These communities may also see social burdens such as increased levels of toxic stress among children and adolescents who grow up in homes with people experiencing substance use disorders, subsequently leading to increased rates of mental illness and substance use disorders amongst these young people.⁷ To address these concerns, and mitigate the individual and societal consequences of substance use disorders, the NHPHA supports policies that:

- Support the funding and implementation of evidence-based prevention programs in any and all sectors of the community;⁸
- Promote early intervention and supports for youth using substances;⁹
- Expand capacity and access to evidence-based treatment opportunities for people with substance use disorders;¹⁰
- Support the funding of accredited, community-based recovery supports;¹¹
- Provide alternative sentencing opportunities for non-violent drug offenders with substance use disorders, such as court-diversion and treatment court programs;¹²
- Limit youth access to alcohol and other drugs, and prohibit the sale of alcohol and other drugs to youth under the age of 21;¹³
- Provide opportunities and incentives for health care systems and providers to offer integrated care between physical and behavioral health services;¹⁴
- Protect and expand insurance coverage for people with substance use disorders and their families;
- Support families with a loved one experiencing a substance use disorder;¹⁶
- Reinforce the fact that substance use disorder is a disease, and promote respect and dignity for all who are impacted by substance misuse in New Hampshire.

(Substance Use Disorders and Substance Misuse cont'd)

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