

# Opioid Misuse Prevention

## Within the Context of Comprehensive Health Education



The *Michigan Model for Health™* (MMH) curriculum divides the broad subject of health into six topics, or units. These topics address the behaviors that result in the most serious health problems or death for young people and adults.

- Social and Emotional Health
- Nutrition and Physical Activity
- Safety
- Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs
- Personal Health and Wellness
- HIV Education and Reproductive Health (higher grade levels)

Students gain knowledge of health issues and the skills to use their knowledge as they choose a healthy lifestyle. Each MMH unit is a combination of information and skills. The knowledge and skills from one unit are often used and reinforced in other units.

Prevention of opioid misuse is integrated into the MMH social and emotional health, safety, and alcohol, tobacco, and other drug units. Effective opioid misuse prevention requires:

- application of the skills taught in the social and emotional health unit,
- the ability and motivation to apply safety rules related to medicines and other drugs, and
- understanding the dangers associated with prescription and over-the-counter medicines and the skills to avoid taking risks taught in the alcohol, tobacco, and other drug unit.

## Integration of Opioid Misuse Prevention



### *Social and Emotional Health*

K-12 social and emotional health units cover topics at age-appropriate grade levels.

- Showing respect and caring while appreciating individual differences
- Identifying and managing emotions
- Protecting self and others from bullying
- Solving problems, making decisions, and resolving conflicts non-violently
- Communicating effectively and appropriately
- Helping others and knowing when and how to get help from trusted adults
- Setting goals
- Advocating for positive behavior

A young person with strong social and emotional health skills is likely to have a strong sense of personal well-being and healthy relationships. These qualities reduce negative risk taking. With decision making and problem-solving skills, students are better able to make healthy decisions about drug use, including opioids. They are less likely to want to harm themselves and more likely to want to prevent others from harmful actions.

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Opioid misuse prevention is integrated into social and emotional health by using examples of prescription drug use as students practice decision making or as they determine situations that need adult assistance. As students examine the relationship between positive and negative friendships and risk taking, they explore how opioid misuse is dangerous and how to think ahead to avoid risky situations.



### ***Safety***

K-12 safety units cover topics at age-appropriate grade levels.

- Pedestrian and wheeled recreation
- Dangerous objects and weapons
- Fire, water, ice, and sun
- Internet
- Vehicle, passenger and driver
- Home alone
- Public areas
- School crisis
- Child sexual abuse and abduction

Students with knowledge of safety issues are prepared to identify and respond to unsafe situations and appropriately report unsafe situations to an adult. They will recognize emergencies and know how to get help. They are advocates for a safe environment and safe behaviors at school, home, and in the community.

Opioid misuse prevention is integrated into safety lessons by discussing medicines as potentially dangerous objects, or poisons, that need to be handled carefully. For young children, this involves following rules for using medicine safely. Older students need to understand the risks involved in opioid and other medicine misuse. Safety rules for being home alone or in public places should include avoidance of medicine misuse. Students learn when it is essential to get help from an adult or medical facility. At the high school level, students learn the dangers of driving or riding with someone driving a car if they are drinking or using drugs. They use assertive communication and refusal skills to stay safe and design projects to promote safety among their peers.



### ***Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs***

K-12 alcohol, tobacco and other drugs units cover these drugs at age-appropriate grade levels.

- Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications
- Poisons
- Tobacco, including secondhand smoke
- Caffeine
- Alcohol

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- Inhalants
- Marijuana
- Steroids and Sports Drinks

In addition, the units address these concepts and skills:

- Impact of drug use on friends and family
- Positive and negative influences on drug use, including advertising and media
- Internal and external influences
- Driving and drug use
- Finding help and reliable and valid resources
- Advocating for a drug-free school
- Identifying trouble in potentially risky situations
- Decision making and problem solving in risky situations
- Assertive communication and refusal skills

Students learn information about the various drugs and their impact on the human body in the kindergarten through twelfth grade units. They add to that knowledge how they are influenced to use or avoid drugs and the skills to achieve a drug-free lifestyle. They also learn where to find help for themselves or others when needed.

The Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs unit is the logical location for integration of opioid misuse prevention knowledge and skills. Many lessons exist across the curriculum that already address medicine and prescription drug misuse. For example, kindergarten students learn a rule for safe medicine use: Only take medicine if it is given to you by a doctor, parent, or trusted adult. As students' progress through the grades, they learn not to take medicine meant for someone else. Older students may face situations where they need to act to stay safe. They learn how to use communication and decision-making skills to avoid risky drug situations, including opioid misuse. These lessons were enhanced and extended to emphasize the dangers of opioid use. Lessons were added at grade levels where opioid focus is missing. At upper grade levels, students are asked to use their influence to motivate their peers to avoid drug use and their skills to obtain help in dangerous situations.

### Support for Teachers and Families

Teachers are motivated and better able to teach any subject if they understand the issues related to the topic. Consequently, the *Michigan Model for Health™* provides training prior to implementation of the health curriculum and teacher references and resources on each health topic. As the curriculum was enhanced to cover opioid misuse, teachers will receive references with background information for the opioid misuse prevention lessons they teach and general information on the topic for personal use.

Families are the most influential teachers of their children. The *Michigan Model for Health™* provides family resource sheets that can be sent home with students or delivered digitally at each elementary grade and at the middle school level. Each grade has opioid misuse prevention information resource sheet for families. Families will be reminded of safe storage of medicines, careful medicine use, disposal of unused medicines, and other critical topics.