

California Opioid Safety Network

Managing Pushback to Opioid Safety Strategies

Quick facts:

- **44% of Americans** believe opioid addiction indicates a lack of willpower or discipline.
- Americans are **3 times more likely** to think of opioid addiction as a national problem instead of a local one. The public does not like to see the problem in their own backyard.
- **58% of Americans** would like to see a lessening of stigma towards people with opioid addiction

Strategies for managing pushback:

- **Reducing stigma as an overarching strategy**
 - Reducing stigma is a key element to making progress for all of the core strategies. To increase support, coalitions can help communities understand that addiction is a disease, not a moral failing or sign of bad character.
- **Balance personal stories (appeal to the heart) with facts or data (appeal to the mind). Additionally, some audiences connect more with one or the other.**
 - Case Study: A coalition member and school nurse who lost her son to a heroin overdose has been able to move the school district through her personal story which appealed to the heart while previous efforts using data and appealing to the mind were less successful.
- **Use a metaphor**
 - Example: Naloxone is an essential tool in communities, much like CPR equipment.
- **Send a specific messenger for each audience**
 - Case study: A mother of an athlete who died of an overdose speaking to current athletes; or a pharmacist conducting academic detailing on naloxone coprescribing with their peers
- **Make the issue local**
 - Build partnerships with local organizations working on stigma reduction, peer-to-peer education, and the mental health community.
 - Reach out to local media outlets, use op-eds and personal stories to bring the national conversation local.
 - Run a stigma reduction public education campaign

California Opioid Safety Network Fact sheets which include key message points with relevant facts and studies, data points you can use in your materials, anticipated questions/push back that you may receive in your media and community outreach, resource websites and studies:

- [Medication Assisted Treatment](#)
- [Naloxone Distribution](#)
- [Reducing Addiction Stigma](#)
- [Safer Prescribing](#)

Resources:

- [California County Fact Sheets: Treatment Gaps in Opioid-Agonist Medication Assisted Therapy \(OA-MAT\) and Estimates of How Many Additional Prescribers Are Needed](#), *The Urban Institute*
- [Want to Reduce Opioid Deaths? Get People the Medications They Need](#), *New York Times*

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