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Partnership for Drug-Free Kids and TASC Launch Online Learning Tool in Arizona

NEW YORK – October 10, 2017 – Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, a nonprofit committed to helping families struggling with their son or daughter’s substance use, has partnered with the Treatment Assessment Screening Center (TASC) of Arizona to launch a new, online learning tool that will help address the opioid epidemic in the state. TASC is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide behavioral health services, substance abuse treatment, education and supportive services in Arizona.

The launch of the [new, online learning tool](#), “Heroin + Other Opioids in Arizona: From Understanding to Action,” marks the first time the two nonprofits are working together to address the problem of opioid abuse and help parents and families in Arizona. The tool was funded by the TASC Community Grant Initiative and is a collaborative effort to help families and community members gain a better understanding of the opioid issue in Arizona, while empowering them to take action to protect their kids and safeguard their hometowns. The online tool is available in English and [Spanish](#) and can be accessed free, online at drugfree.org/opioids-az/.

“Heroin and Other Opioids in Arizona’ is a resource that benefits those who are working within their communities to implement effective policies to prevent and respond to the current opioid crisis,” said Kevin Collins, Director of Parent and Community Support Services for Partnership for Drug-Free Kids. “We want to provide these community leaders and families with accessible and easy-to-digest content, like videos and local stats that help educate and facilitate action.”

“Heroin + Other Opioids in Arizona: From Understanding to Action”

The online tool consists of three short videos, “What are Opioids?,” “How Big is the Problem?” and “What We Need to Do.” Those who access the tool will take away a basic understanding of the nation’s opioid crisis, how it is affecting Arizona, and most importantly, what can be done to help parents and civic leaders address the issue in their state. Local law enforcement agencies, schools, governments and others are encouraged to share access to the online tool via their websites and social networks.

“There is an urgent need to educate as many Arizona families as possible about the nationwide opiate epidemic, the impact it is having on our communities throughout Arizona, and to provide them with helpful information and useful resources,” said Douglas Kramer, CEO of TASC. “These new videos help make that possible, and we are so pleased they are available not only in English, but also for Spanish-language speakers.”

The first part of the online tool, “What are Opioids?,” helps educate viewers about opioids, how and why opioids are abused and the dangerous ways in which people mix them with alcohol and other drugs. This section also informs family members about what they can do if a loved one is experiencing an opioid overdose and how they can get them help.

The “How Big is the Problem?” section explores the link between prescription painkillers and heroin, which are both opioids, and explains the scope of the national opioid epidemic compared to its prevalence in Arizona. It illustrates that from 2005-2015, deaths from heroin increased 328 percent nationally, while there was an almost 700 percent increase in heroin overdose deaths in Arizona alone. There was also a 44 percent increase in deaths related to opioid pain relievers in Arizona – a state that is located right in the path of one of the major transportation routes of heroin distribution in the U.S.

Finally, the “What We Need to Do” section identifies actions that are currently in place at the community level to help turn the tide in the opioid epidemic. These include distribution of the opioid overdose antidote, naloxone, increased prescriber education and the implementation of Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs – and how these can be collectively improved. This section also identifies actions that parents can take, including communicating more effectively with their children about the dangers of opioid and heroin use and addiction. Partnership resources for families are also prominently featured in this section, which includes direct, one-on-one services like the [Parent Helpline](#) (855-DRUGFREE) and comprehensive guides like the Partnership’s [Medication-Assisted Treatment e-book](#).

Deputy Fire Chief Montgomery is a nationally registered paramedic who has been serving the residents of Arizona for over three decades. As a first responder, Chief Montgomery has seen first-hand the day-to-day impact that opioid and heroin use has had in communities across the state.

“Understanding the magnitude of this problem is very important for any Fire or Emergency Medical Service/EMS agency. Paramedics have injected naloxone into patients for decades, but never in these volumes. Sometimes it is even given to more than one patient at a single emergency scene,” said Deputy Fire Chief Montgomery. “This is a national epidemic that affects all social classes and is not going away anytime soon. These are our citizens, young and old, and they need our compassion now more than ever.”

Dr. Bruce Bethancourt, MD, Chief Medical Officer of the Dignity Health Medical Group in Arizona urges families to intervene and take immediate action if they suspect a loved one is misusing or abusing opioids.

“If you identify a brother, sister, child or friend who is misusing or has become addicted to opioids, I urge you to intervene quickly today – not tomorrow – for tomorrow may never come for them,” said Dr. Bethancourt. “Don’t worry that you might offend them, but instead think of how you will feel if you waited too long. Please take action to help save their life.”

For more information, please visit [Partnership for Drug-Free Kids](#).

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About Partnership for Drug-Free Kids

Partnership for Drug-Free Kids is committed to helping families struggling with their son or daughter’s substance use. We empower families with information, support and guidance to get the help their loved one needs and deserves. On our website, [drugfree.org](#), and through our toll-free helpline (1-855-DRUGFREE), we provide families with direct support and guidance to help them address teen substance use. Finally, we build healthy communities, advocating for greater understanding and more effective programs to treat the disease of addiction. As a national nonprofit, we depend on donations from individuals, corporations, foundations and the public sector and are thankful to SAG-AFTRA and the advertising and media industries for their ongoing generosity. We are proud to receive a Four-Star rating from Charity Navigator, America’s largest and most-utilized independent evaluator of charities, as well as a National Accredited Charity Seal from The Better Business Bureau’s Wise Giving Alliance.

About Treatment Assessment Screening Center (TASC)

Treatment Assessment Screening Center (TASC) is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona. Founded in 1977, TASC of Arizona is known nationally as an innovator in the development and implementation of drug testing and behavioral health programs and is recognized nationally for creating behavioral health programs that promote positive, life-changing growth. TASC has a full spectrum of services that provide comprehensive treatment, education and rehabilitation for those dealing with substance abuse. By working closely with individuals, families, other nonprofits and the behavioral health system, we help make our communities safer and healthier. TASC is licensed by the Arizona Department of Health Services as an outpatient behavioral health clinic, domestic violence offender treatment program, clinical laboratory, and DUI screening, education and treatment provider.