



“RxSafe Marin: Prescription Drug Misuse/Abuse Initiative”

Overview: Launched in 2014, RxSafe Marin is a coalition of community and public health experts collaboratively addressing the local epidemic of prescription drug misuse and abuse.

Challenge: Prescription drug misuse and abuse is a national epidemic, and Marin County has been deeply affected. Between 2006 and 2013, Marin experienced a more than two-fold increase in opioid prescriptions, drug overdose deaths, and emergency room visits related to opioid use. One in five Marin County high school juniors reports using prescription pain medications recreationally. Based on these alarming trends, the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) established prescription drug abuse as a public health priority in 2013. We recognized this as a complex social problem that requires coordinated strategies between healthcare systems, public health, law enforcement and other sectors, but found few established models of successful inter-sector efforts to borrow from. The overarching challenge was to design an integrated local response to this emerging epidemic in the absence of infrastructure dedicated to prescription drug abuse, both inside and outside of public health. RxSafe Marin highlights the role of public health to call communities to action around emerging threats, using data and clear communication, and for convening disparate partners to align strategies around common goals.

Innovative Solution: RxSafe Marin is structured to take advantage of the diverse experiences and resources in our community to achieve a singular vision: to prevent prescription drug misuse and abuse and save lives. RxSafe Marin is structured around Action Teams in five areas of concentration: Community-Based Prevention; Prescribers and Pharmacists; Data Collection and Monitoring; Treatment and Recovery; and Law Enforcement. This structure was based on wide strategic input from stakeholders in early 2014 and HHS serves as the backbone support to help move this initiative forward. The structure and operations of RxSafe Marin are innovations in cross-sector collaboration, and more specific innovations arise from the action teams themselves. Early in the effort, the Data Action Team developed a county-wide “report card” to describe the scope of the problem and track progress towards established goals. This interactive and publically accessible dashboard (www.RxSafeMarin.org) includes ten key indicators. An inclusive process for selecting common metrics ensured relevance to all partners. To support the Prescribers and Pharmacists Action Team goal to reduce opioid prescribing, county-wide safe prescribing standards for all Emergency Departments and primary care settings were developed and adopted. The Community-Based Prevention Action Team has innovated the use of social media to raise public awareness and mobilize community and elected officials to support policy solutions.

Originality: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention highlight the need for multi-sector approaches to prescription drug abuse, citing that healthcare-focused interventions have limited impact in isolation. RxSafe Marin has been highlighted as being among

the first such models to demonstrate success, and is a model that is being replicated in other communities across the state. Original innovations of the action teams are being replicated. The Data Team has shared their process for developing the community dashboard at national and state conferences, and members serve on several state task forces dedicated to developing a standardized surveillance method for this epidemic. Through RxSafe Marin, the County was among the first to adopt county-wide opioid prescribing standards for both Emergency Departments and primary care settings. The Law Enforcement team pioneered a letter for prescribers, sent from the District Attorney, alerting them when one of their patients is found using prescribed medications illegally. This is being adopted more widely state-wide. Inexpensive and high impact social media communication strategies have been shared with newer coalitions throughout the state.

Cost Effectiveness: Successful reduction in opioid prescribing and related harm realizes significant savings across the healthcare system and community. The Medi-Cal population in Marin saw a 58% reduction in the average opioid dose prescribed between 2014 and 2016. Decreases in direct medication costs for opioids have yielded millions of dollars in annual savings to Partnership HealthPlan of California, which can be re-invested in other preventive and treatment services. In addition, there have been half as many overdose deaths in Marin in 2014 and 2015 compared to 2012 and 2013. RxSafe Marin was awarded a Let's Get Health California Innovation Challenge Award in the category of "Lowering the Cost of Care" partly due to system-wide benefits of reducing the costly burden of prescription drug abuse. The cost savings of this initiative are due to efficiencies in focusing existing community resources toward a set of common goals. HHS has provided expertise, resources, and support through part-time staff and the HHS Media Team. HHS secured three-year funding of \$100,000 per year through the Marin County Board of Supervisors. The processes being put in place such as changes in medical and law enforcement practice are budget neutral and will remain.

Results: The ultimate goal of RxSafe Marin is to prevent harm from prescription drug abuse and to save lives. There have been half as many overdose deaths in Marin in 2014 and 2015 compared to 2012 and 2013, and current overdose deaths are lower than any point since 2008. This is counter to state and national trends of increasing deaths. While this is likely multifactorial, given the measured decrease in opioid prescribing (58 % decrease between 2014-2016) and increased community awareness we are hopeful that this is the beginning of the reversal of this epidemic. Other results include: county-wide prescribing standards for primary care and Emergency Departments; law enforcement notifications to prescribers of medicines being used illegally; enhanced treatment options for opioid dependence and addiction ; a local data dashboard for tracking progress; innovative social media campaigns to increase community awareness; inclusion of controlled substances in local Social Host Ordinances to reduce youth access; and increased drug take-back sites for unused and unwanted medications through the Marin County Safe Drug Disposal Ordinance.

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