

THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC. 5 DEATHS EVERY HOUR.



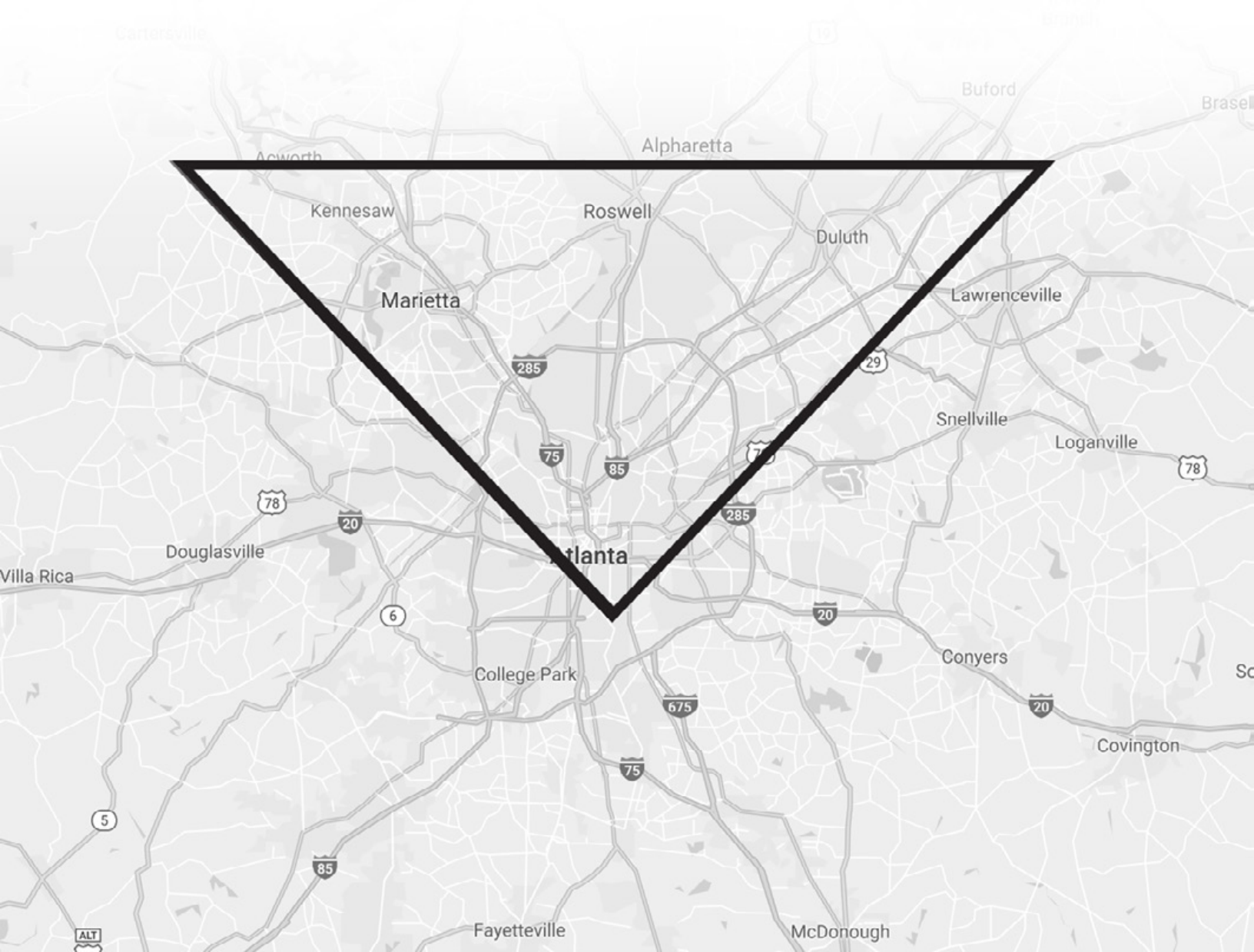
# INTERVENTION<sup>®</sup>

THE HEROIN TRIANGLE  
EDUCATION GUIDE

WE ARE **A&E**

A&E's Emmy® Award-winning docuseries *Intervention* features a special season following interconnected stories of addicts and their families suffering at the hands of the national opioid crisis. Living in a cluster of communities within the affluent Atlanta suburbs known as "The Heroin Triangle," the series highlights the desperate need for support and help during this national drug emergency. This season also includes city officials who are on the ground fighting as they attempt to intervene and save the lives of those affected by the opioid crisis as well as help heal the community.

Veteran interventionists Candy Finnigan, Ken Seeley, and Donna Chavous partner with interventionist and Georgia native, Heather Hayes, as well as new team member Michael Gonzales as they face the biggest challenge of their careers and attempt to help these victims of addiction. This series offers insights into the opioid crisis and the ways intervention can serve as a powerful solution.



## CURRICULUM LINKS

*Intervention* would be useful for Current Events, Journalism, Social Issues and Health courses. It would also be useful for after school programs, community programs or treatment programs. This series is appropriate for advanced high school students, college students and general adult audiences. Learn more about this series at:

<http://www.aetv.com/intervention>

## PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITY

Students can watch the following videos to help answer the questions below.

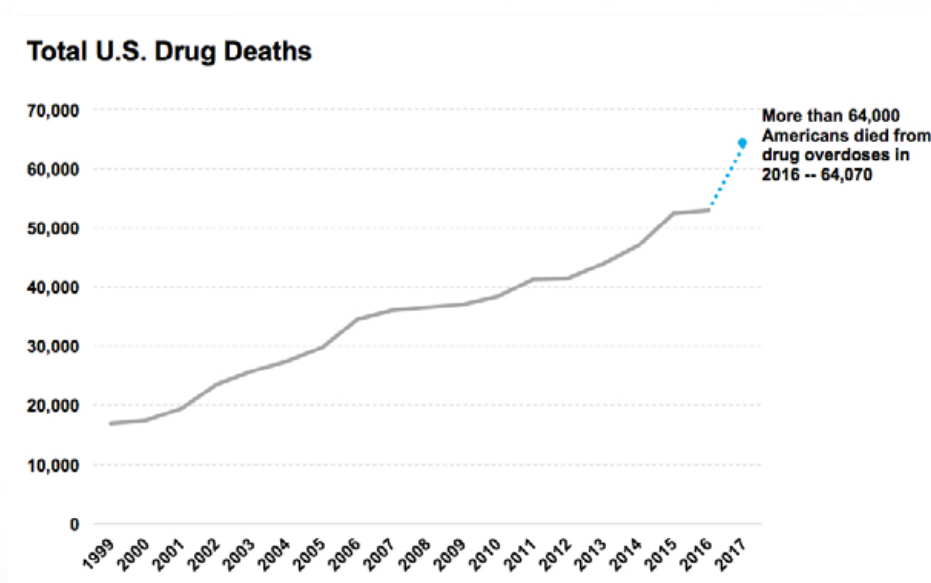
[What is an intervention?](#)

[What is addiction?](#)

[What is recovery?](#)

## PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONS

1. What does the term "intervention" mean? Students can look up the term and define it in writing or by discussing with a group.
2. What is an "addiction"? Encourage students to discuss among themselves and then share with the class. Then, provide a formal definition for the term.
3. What is the definition of an "opioid"?



# Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think heroin and other opioids have spread from cities to suburbs at such a rapid rate? What do you think are the causes of the opioid crisis?
2. What is the connection between prescription painkillers and heroin addiction?
3. Why do you think that children with parents who are addicts are 3 to 4 times more likely to be addicts themselves? Do you think there is anything that can be done to help combat this reality?
4. How do you think communities can better help those suffering from addiction?
5. What do you think about the tactics used by police in Marietta? What role do you think law enforcement can play in helping people and communities affected by addiction?
6. Do you think there's anything schools could do better to help students who have addictions? Or to help educate students to prevent addictions?
7. What aspects of this series do you find most memorable, surprising or insightful?
8. What role can intervention play in helping those struggling from addiction?

# The Opioid Epidemic in the United States

The United States is in the midst of an opioid epidemic.

- [Opioids](#) (including [prescription opioids](#), [heroin](#), and [fentanyl](#)) killed more than 42,000 people in 2016, more than any year on record. 40% of all opioid overdose deaths involve a prescription opioid.  
Source: [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)
- Heroin use more than doubled among young adults ages 18-25 in the past decade. More than 9 in 10 people who used heroin also used at least one other drug. 45% of people who used heroin were also addicted to prescription opioid painkillers.  
Source: [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)
- Prescription opioids cost the US \$78.5 billion in 2013 in costs related to crime, lost work productivity and health care.  
Source: [drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)





# THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC BY THE NUMBERS

IN 2016...



**116**

People died every day from opioid-related drug overdoses



**11.5 m**

People misused prescription opioids<sup>1</sup>



**42,249**

People died from overdosing on opioids<sup>2</sup>



**2.1 million**

People misused prescription opioids for the first time<sup>1</sup>



**2.1 million**

People had an opioid use disorder<sup>1</sup>



**17,087**

Deaths attributed to overdosing on commonly prescribed opioids<sup>2</sup>



**948,000**

People used heroin<sup>1</sup>



**19,413**

Deaths attributed to overdosing on synthetic opioids other than methadone<sup>2</sup>



**170,000**

People used heroin for the first time<sup>1</sup>



**15,469**

Deaths attributed to overdosing on heroin<sup>2</sup>



**504 billion**

In economic costs<sup>3</sup>

Sources: <sup>1</sup> 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, <sup>2</sup> Mortality in the United States, 2016 NCHS Data Brief No. 293, December 2017, <sup>3</sup> CEA Report: The underestimated cost of the opioid crisis, 2017

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you find most alarming about the infographic above? Why?
2. Take a minute to consider the financial impact of the opioid epidemic. Imagine the opioid epidemic was no longer a concern and communities did not have to deal with the cost associated with it. What do you think would be the most impactful thing for the government to do with the money? Discuss potential changes/programs in small groups.
3. Why do you think it's so common for people to misuse prescription opioids?
4. Do you think if physicians prescribed opioids less regularly some of these statistics would decrease? Why or why not?

## ACTIVITIES

1. **Spreading the Word.** Ask students to research how the number of people who die from drug overdoses in the US relates to other causes of death. Have students determine the top 5 causes of death in the US and create a chart or graph to display their findings. Now, have students examine the graph in this guide to understand that the majority of overdose deaths in the US are from opioids. Ask students to discuss their findings as a class and why they think this is the case. Are they surprised by what they found? You might also ask students to take it a step further and have them develop posters to hang around the school to educate other students about these statistics. Or, take a more modern approach and have students develop a social media campaign to spread their message to their peers.
2. **Determining Responsibility.** Students can review the [Official Opioid Commission Report](#) to learn more about the opioid epidemic in the US and recommended solutions. Ask students to specifically review the "Substance Use Treatment Availability" section. Why do you think there is a lack of treatment facilities in some counties across the US? Do you think the responsibility for providing adequate treatment centers lies with the government? Why or why not? What do you think is preventing these counties from having substance use disorder treatment facilities? How can we overcome those challenges?

## DRUGGED DRIVING

While viewing the series *Intervention*, students will be exposed to several participants using drugs while in their car. Often, the national conversation around impaired driving is focused on drunk driving but this series reminds us that drugged driving is equally as dangerous.

- According to the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), in 2016, 20.7 million people aged 16 or older drove under the influence of alcohol in the past year and 11.8 million drove under the influence of illicit drugs.

Source: [drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)

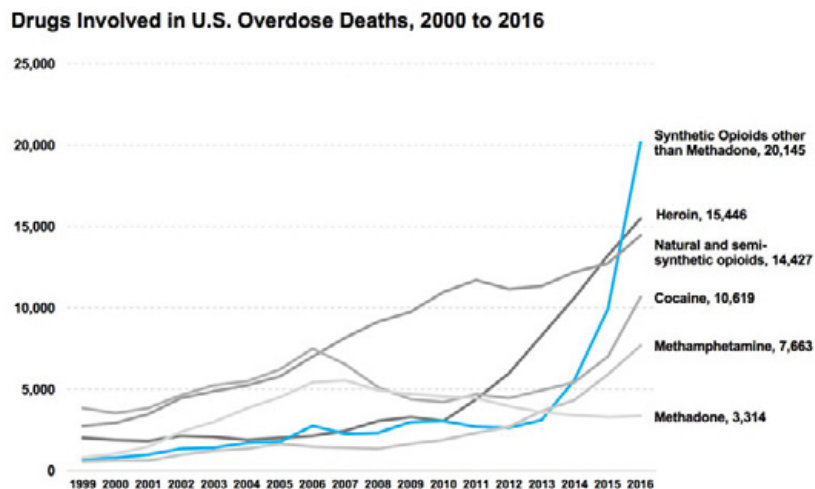
- NSDUH findings also show that men are more likely than women to drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol. And a higher percentage of young adults aged 18 to 25 drive after taking drugs or drinking than do adults 26 or older.

Source: [drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think younger people are more likely to drive under the influence than older people?
2. What do you think schools, communities or governments can do to minimize the number of people driving under the influence?

## UNDERSTANDING THE DATA AND GOVERNMENT ACTION



Source: [C.D.C. WONDER](http://C.D.C.WONDER)



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the rise of deaths involving synthetic opioids between 2013-2016 is so stark?
2. Are you curious why the number of Methadone related deaths is the only one that has decreased? Why do you think that is the case?
3. What do you think can be done to decrease the number of overdose deaths in the US?

## ACTIVITIES

| RISK FACTORS                     | PROTECTIVE FACTORS              |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Aggressive behavior in childhood | Good self-control               |
| Lack of parental supervision     | Parental monitoring and support |
| Poor social skills               | Positive relationships          |
| Drug experimentation             | Academic Competence             |
| Availability of drugs at school  | School anti-drug policies       |
| Community poverty                | Neighborhood pride              |

Source: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drug-abuse-addiction>



## ACTIVITIES

- 1. Understanding Risk Factors.** Analyze the chart above. Does it seem like most of the factors identified are controllable by our actions and the actions of those around us? How do you think school, communities and families can help reduce risk factors? Why do you think it is more challenging for some communities to prevent drug addiction than others? If you were working in government, what laws or policies might you enact to help reduce the risk factors for drug addiction in your community?
- 2. Reporting the Impact.** Ask students to read this article from The New York Times. This article discusses the danger of fentanyl and the rapid rate at which it's spreading across the country. Based on what you've read in this article and learned, what do you think states and communities can do to minimize the prevalence of fentanyl? This article also discusses the challenges associated with collecting mortality data related to drug overdoses. Do you think these challenges impact our conversation about opioid addiction? What policies could we put in place to help alleviate some of these challenges?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[SAFE – Stop the Addiction Fatality Epidemic](#)  
[National Institute on Drug Abuse – Opioid Crisis](#)  
[NIH Initiative to Help End the Opioid Crisis](#)  
[HHS – About the Opioid Epidemic](#)

[Partnership for Drug-Free Kids](#)  
[NIDA for Teens](#)  
[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)  
[Just Think Twice](#)  
[A Prescription for Action](#)  
[Intervention 911](#)  
[Medicine Abuse Project](#)  
[Addiction Recovery Guide](#)

## FIND HELP ON AETV.COM

These [online resources for treatment](#) can help those who need addiction and recovery assistance.

## MEET THE EXPERTS

Meet the [expert interventionists](#) featured on the award-winning A&E series.

## BOOKS

Quinones, Sam. *Dreamland: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic*. Bloomsbury Press, 2015.

Sheff, David. *CLEAN: Overcoming Addiction and Ending America's Greatest Tragedy*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2013.

Sheff, Nic. *We All Fall Down: Living with Addiction* (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2012).

Szalavitz, Maia. *Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction* (Audible Studios, 2016).

Jay, Jeff and Debra Jay. *Love First: A Family's Guide to Intervention* (Hazelden, 2008).

Fisher, Gary L. *Understanding Why Addicts Are Not All Alike: Recognizing the Types and How Their Differences Affect Intervention and Treatment* (Praeger, 2011).