

The HEART of the Opioid Epidemic

08/19/2021

The HEART of the Opioid Epidemic:

A cutting-edge program to address substance use disorder in Utah

Learn about the [HEART Initiative](#), a program through Utah State University Extension that partners with communities to address the opioid epidemic and other public health issues. The program uses four pillars to address opioid use and support individuals with substance use disorder:

- **Stigma reduction and harm reduction**, such as community outreach programs in partnership with the Carbon & Emery Opioid & Substance Use Coalition, and the Ogden Civic Action Network
- **Strengthening community ties**, including community-led pain education and empathy classes, and partnering with local organizations
- **Prevention and education**, like the Pain Education and Opioid Monitoring Program that serves veterans in Emery and Tooele counties
- **Resilience building** through evidence-based practices and trainings

Maren Wright Voss | Home and Community Department, Extension

[Dr. Maren Wright Voss](#) is a health and wellness faculty member with USU Extension's [HEART Initiative](#). She and her colleagues bring evidence-based opioid harm reduction programs into Utah communities.

Listen to [Maren on Instead](#), a podcast produced by the Utah State University Office of Research. During the 42-minute episode, Voss walks listeners through a brief timeline of opioid addiction in the United States, what can be learned talking to people who have struggled with opioid abuse, how doctors can approach the health crisis, and the evidence-based programs developed and administered by Extension's HEART Initiative to aid in harm reduction.

Much of Voss's work focuses on the administration of pain management courses. In these courses, participants learn strategies for reducing pain that are not medication based. These include better sleep strategies, action planning or even stretching. Voss urges people struggling with addiction to take advantage of these alternative methods, and to those who feel there is no point, she says, "Come knowing there is hope."

Featured Presenter

