

Opioid Epidemic

Discussion Guide



Let's review

At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room.

And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so listen and be prepared to hear a different point of view. Remember, you do not need to share your political affiliation; this is a discussion and exchange of ideas, not politics.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

The "Table-it" Rule: If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

Let's begin

- Take five minutes to review the [Executive Summary](#) for this brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
 - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
 - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- In 2020, an estimated [9.5 million people](#) aged 12 or older misused opioids.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CD) [estimates the economic burden](#) of prescription opioid misuse, including costs of healthcare, lost productivity, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement, amounts to \$78.5 billion annually in the U.S. Federal opioid funding amounted to [\\$7.6 billion](#) in fiscal year (FY) 2019.
- In 2020, the U.S. saw a 29% rise over 2019's record, hitting a new record of [93,000 overdose deaths](#), the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period. [More Americans die from drug overdoses](#) than from car accidents or gun violence.

Let's discuss

Below are 3 questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** What role can individuals play in combating the opioid epidemic in their communities?
- **Local, State or Federal Government:** How can the challenges posed by the opioid epidemic be addressed? What resources are necessary?
- **Business:** How can businesses join the fight against the opioid epidemic while also addressing positive drug tests among applicants and balancing labor shortages?

Let's act

1. **Take it local. Talk to your neighbors** to identify how the opioid epidemic is affecting your community. Identify opportunities to work with other community members in your area.
2. **Explore the impact of drug prescription laws in your community.** Search on your state's website for your local Department of Health, or search for your state laws on [Ballotpedia](#).
3. **Investigate community programs** in your state or municipality. See if your state or county has an [agency participating in ODMAP](#), or search on your state or municipality's website for your local Department of Health using keywords such as "healthcare" or "department of health" to see if an opioid-related task force exists.
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on opioid prescribing laws, and their vision for how to tackle drug-related challenges facing Americans and your community. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on the opioid epidemic in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
 - [Healthcare](#)
 - [Creating Career Pathways](#)
 - [Stitching the Fabric of Neighborhoods](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.