



When it comes to addiction and substance use disorders, the landscape in our community continues to change. The dangerous rise of fentanyl, more relaxed attitudes about cannabis use, and the mental health impact of technology and social media use among teens spell new challenges for Northern Virginia's families.

Now, more than ever it is critical to work together as a community to tackle this issue and Act on Addiction.



GET THE FACTS ON OPIOIDS

The use of opioids and synthetic opioids in illegal drugs has spelled out dangerous and deadly consequences for individuals, families, and entire communities across the United States and right here in Northern Virginia.

WHAT ARE OPIOIDS?

What are opioids? Opioids are a class of drugs that work in the brain to produce a variety of effects, including pain relief. Opioid drugs include prescription pain medicine and illegal drugs. Opioids can be highly addictive and can cause fatal overdoses.

Types of Opioids include, but are not limited to:

- Heroin
- Fentanyl
- Morphine
- Oxycodone/Hydrocodone

- Since 2020, **more Virginians have died from fatal drug overdoses** than motor vehicle and gun-related deaths combined ([Virginia Department of Emergency Management](#))
- A vast majority of overdose deaths in our community involved fentanyl, fentanyl analogs/analogues, and tramadol: in 2022, **these substances resulted in nearly 80% of drug overdose deaths in Fairfax County**
- Opioids are the leading killer among varying drug types at **21.9 deaths per 100,000** in Virginia ([VDH](#))
- Fentanyl overdose deaths in the Commonwealth has **grown over 20-fold since 2013** ([Virginia Department of Emergency Management](#))



CANNABIS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW POST LEGALIZATION IN THE DMV

The shifting legal landscape around cannabis has altered perceptions of THC, leading to misconceptions about its safety. Though only legal for recreational use for those 21 and older, this legal change has relaxed attitudes among parents about its consequences and increased the likelihood of individuals trying it, unaware of overall health risks, and the potential for illegally obtained cannabis to be laced with dangerous substances.

- Nationwide, **30.7%** of 12th graders reported using cannabis **in the past year**
- **6.3%** reported using cannabis daily **in the past 30 days** ([CDC](#))
- **45%** of 18–20-year-olds in Virginia have used cannabis **at some point** ([VCU](#))
 - 14% reported their first use between the ages of 12-14
 - 39% reported their first use between the ages of 15-17

DID YOU KNOW?

Cannabis purchased from unlicensed sellers may still contain dangerous substances (such as fentanyl) vs cannabis purchased at a government-sanctioned dispensary.



SOCIAL MEDIA AND MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTION

As technology continues to grow rapidly and becomes increasingly ingrained in our lives, the lack of resources to identify and treat social media addiction has led to negative impacts on the children and teens mental health and development.

- **95%** of teens between the ages of 13 and 17 say they **use a social media platform** ([NIH](#))
- Teens who spend **3+ hours a day on social media** “**face double the risk of experiencing poor mental health outcomes**, including symptoms of depression and anxiety” ([JAMA](#))
- **37%** Northern Virginia high school students experienced **clinical anxiety or depression** ([Shape of Youth Mental Health](#))
- **10%** of Northern Virginia high school students **seriously contemplated suicide** ([Shape of Youth Mental Health](#))
- A [2021 study](#) found a significant risk of **increased substance use associated with depression risk, severe anxiety risk, and screen time**

DRUGS ON DEMAND-THE SOCIAL MEDIA DRUG TRADE

- In 2021, the DEA launched an investigation that found **drug traffickers using Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Tik Tok, X, and YouTube** as a means to promote their drugs
- The DEA investigated more than **80 cases** where **drugs were bought and sold via social media**
- **Main buyers were adolescents and young people** using apps like Venmo, Cash App, and Zelle



ACTING ON ADDICTION

Despite alarming statistics and a rapidly changing landscape, positive changes offer hope in the fight against addiction. Though drug overdose deaths have risen in recent years, we're now seeing signs of improvement.

DID YOU KNOW?

- **Drug-related deaths in Virginia have fallen in the last year**, (26.1 per 100,000 in 2023 and 29 per 100,000 in 2022), opioids account for the leading cause of drug-related deaths in the state
 - This may be attributed to wider understanding of the issue, and improved public awareness and access to life-saving interventions like Narcan, which is why it is **paramount that we make Narcan readily available and easily accessible for all.**
- **55%** of respondents from Act on Addictions 2023 survey said that they **feel somewhat to fully comfortable talking to a friend of family member who was dealing with addiction**
- It is important to speak up if you or a loved one is battling substance addiction, **simple conversations can go a long way**

There is room for everyone to get involved and Act on Addiction, and it will take all of us playing a role to make changes for the better.

To learn more visit <https://actonaddictionnow.org/> and attend VOICES [2024 Youth & Family Behavioral Health Assembly](#) and tune into Inova's English (linked) and Spanish Webinars on addiction and anti-stigma

Tuesday, September 17th at 7pm ET

- [Webinar link: English](#)
- [Enlace del seminario web: Espanol](#)

Thursday, September 19th at 7pm ET

- [Webinar link: English](#)
- [Enlace del seminario web: Espanol](#)