

# Dept. of Health Services: State agencies launch Real Talks campaign to prevent and reduce substance use

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In response to rising rates of substance use across Wisconsin, Gov. Tony Evers, the Department of Health Services (DHS) and Department of Justice (DOJ) have unveiled [Real Talks Wisconsin](#), an effort to give residents the information they need to keep themselves, their families, and their communities healthy and safe.

Real Talks Wisconsin promotes frequent conversations to prevent and reduce substance use through supportive relationships. Real talks are based on asking open-ended questions, having empathy, and helping problem solve.

“Wisconsinites are helpers by nature and through Real Talks, folks and families will have the tools and information they need to better help their friends, neighbors, and loved ones who are struggling with substance use,” said Gov. Evers. “This is about the health and well-being of our families and communities and supporting one another through difficult conversations. By talking about challenges with substance use and helping people on their recovery journey, we can build a healthier state for everyone.”

“We can prevent and reduce substance use by being real with each other,” said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. “It’s time to talk about substance use in an open, honest, and caring way. Real talks help create connection. That connection helps create spaces where hope, health, and healing are possible.”

The initial phase of Real Talks Wisconsin is a series of pages on the DHS website with facts about substance use in Wisconsin, conversation tips, and actions people and communities can take to be well. Future phases will include video guides and

printed materials about how to have real talks.

Substance use often involves a mix of drugs. That's why Real Talks Wisconsin isn't focused on a specific substance. This effort is built around strategies that can be used to prevent or reduce any type of drug use.

"We must take a comprehensive approach to reducing substance use disorder," said Attorney General Josh Kaul. "Raising awareness is part of that comprehensive approach, and Real Talks Wisconsin provides tools to help get conversations started in your family and in your community."

Real Talks Wisconsin builds off the success of the DHS [Small Talks](#) initiative, which promotes conversations with kids on the dangers of underage drinking, and the DHS and DOJ [Dose of Reality](#) initiative, which promotes having conversations on the dangers of opioids.

Real Talks Wisconsin is part of a series of DHS investments to prevent and reduce substance use. State and federal funding is being used to build community prevention programs; support harm reduction efforts like free access to NARCAN®, the opioid overdose reversal drug, and fentanyl test strips; expand access to treatment services; and enhance recovery supports.

People struggling with substance use can contact the Wisconsin Addiction Recovery Helpline to be connected to treatment options. Call 211 or log on to [addictionhelpwi.org](http://addictionhelpwi.org)