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## Preventing Substance Use and Related Negative Outcomes in Jackson County, OR

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COUN 6785: Social Change in Action:  
Prevention, Consultation, and Advocacy

**Social Change Portfolio**

Angela Arechiga

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## OVERVIEW

**Keywords:** Preventing substance abuse in Jackson County OR with proven methods.

**Preventing Substance Use and Related Negative Outcomes in Jackson County, OR**

**Goal Statement:** The goal of this Social Change Portfolio is to raise awareness of the dangers of certain substances such as fentanyl, increase prevention measures, and reduce overall overdoses in Jackson County for the teen population.

**Significant Findings:** This paper examines substance abuse in Jackson County, Oregon. The county has over 229,000 residents, with over 105 overdoses so far in 2023. Looking at various factors, we can look at what contributes to and protects people from getting involved in substance abuse. Many people need help in Jackson County, but one population in particular is the American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN). Additionally, in order to prevent substance abuse, we need to focus prevention measures on those who would benefit the most, such as adolescents.

**Objectives/Strategies/Interventions/Next Steps:** We can see what is needed to help those in Jackson County by looking at past successful prevention measures. We can also take the risk and protective factors to see where efforts are needed. If we can increase education for adolescents to prevent substance abuse while also increasing protective factors, we can help protect the vulnerable. This can be accomplished by focusing on prevention measures during school times. These would teach the children the consequences of substance abuse, teaching life skills and how to successfully navigate challenges.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Preventing Substance Use and Related Negative Outcomes in Jackson County, OR

Oregon, like most other states, is experiencing an opioid crisis, with many people misusing, abusing, overdosing, and dying. According to the US Census, Jackson County, Oregon, comprises about eleven cities with a population of about 229,000. Jackson County has been seeing an increase in illicit opioid overdoses. While prescription opioid abuse has decreased, there has been a spike in overdoses from fentanyl and methamphetamines. They are often mixed with other drugs, chemicals, or opioids. Unfortunately, opioid-related disorders have become one of the fastest-growing addictions in the United States (Kress & Paylo, 2019).

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## PART 1: SCOPE AND CONSEQUENCES

### Preventing Substance Use and Related Negative Outcomes in Jackson County, OR

Knowing the statistics to increase prevention measures in Jackson County is essential. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2023), a lethal dose of fentanyl can be very small; it is 50 times stronger than heroin, 100 times stronger than morphine, and nearly 150 people die every day from overdosing on it. Almost half of overdose deaths in Oregon are due to opioids and involve more than one drug and/or alcohol (Oregon Health Authority (OHA), 2023). Fentanyl is very dangerous as it can come in many forms and even look like candy (CDC, 2023). Increasing awareness of the seriousness of opioids can prevent overdoses and usage, and it will reduce the risk of addiction. Over the summer of 2023, Jackson County medical examiners counted ten overdose deaths in just five days. Jackson County Sheriff Nate Sickler said the county has had about 105 overdose deaths so far in November of 2023.

According to a flash report issued by Jackson County Health & Human Services (2023), there is no safe way to take fentanyl, but there are ways to reduce the risk of overdosing.

According to the National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics (NCDAS, n.d.), among those aged 15 to 24 years, the average annual OD death rate is 12.6 out of every 100,000. Sadly, these numbers are growing. Opioid usage also leads to physical and mental health issues, increasing risky behavior and increasing costs for all involved. The goal of this Social Change Portfolio is to raise awareness of the dangers of fentanyl, increase prevention measures, and reduce overall overdoses in Jackson County for the teen population.

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## PART 2: SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL

### Preventing Substance Use and Related Negative Outcomes in Jackson County, OR

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, n.d), there are various risk and protective factors that can contribute to substance abuse disorders. Jackson County has over 229,000 residents (US Census, n.d.); each resident is unique, meaning each resident can have various risk and protective factors. The social-ecological model explains how a person's choices are influenced by multiple factors such as personal and biological history, relationships, community, and society (Center for Disease Control (CDC), n.d.). To prevent substance abuse, we must look at the factors that can increase or decrease usage at each of these levels.

However, it must also be noted that not all those who have experienced these risk factors will succumb to substances. Some individuals are exposed to enough protective factors that will keep them from using substances. Additionally, the presence of multiple protective factors can further lessen the effects of the risk factors.

#### **Risk**

##### ***Personal and Biological History***

At the individual level, various personal and biological factors come into play, such as education level, history of family mental health, personal mental health concerns, medical conditions, family income level, and employment in the family. An individual living below the poverty line, witnessing intimate partner violence, experiencing chronic pain, having a broken home, or one riddled with stress can also contribute to the likelihood of substance abuse. The most significant factor is if there is a family history of substance abuse. Additionally, trauma, be it from personal experience or even generational trauma.

### ***Relationships***

At this level, it is about the people that surround you. Being around friends, family, or co-workers who abuse substances can increase the risk of use. Additionally, children who have inadequate supervision or positive parental engagement are more likely to deal with substance abuse (CDC, 2018). When no one is watching over children and their interactions, it can be easy for early signs to be missed. The accessibility of these substances can also increase the risk of personal use as they are easily obtained if someone around them is also using them. There is also a chance for accidental exposure that leads to misuse. If a child injures themselves, they may have someone with good intentions offer them a prescription pain medication, and the guardian/parent may not realize the danger.

### ***Community***

Our community can impact behaviors and include settings such as school, work, neighborhood, and different locals that are visited (SAMHSA, n.d. a). If a child is located where there is high substance use, there is a greater risk involved for personal usage. Neighborhoods that are known for drug use, drug sales, poverty, and crime have higher chances of people

succumbing to substance abuse. There is also risk involved if the child is not engaged in activities or connected with their school (CDC, 2018). Additionally, if there is a lack of resources in the community, it can increase the risks.

### ***Society***

Sadly, under Measure 110, Oregon has decriminalized small amounts of illegal substances like heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine as long as it is for personal use. This has caused an increase in people coming to the state who use hard drugs as they know they will not be bothered here. Additionally, there is a lack of economic opportunity across the United States, which increases the chances of substance abuse for everyone.

### **Protective**

#### ***Personal and Biological History***

Some protective factors SAMHSA (n.d) identified are having a good attitude about self, healthy relationships, and being socially competent. There is also a protective factor in being healthy, being in good physical condition, or not needing to be prescribed narcotics for pain relief. Additionally, having no family or personal history of mental health or substance abuse can reduce the risk of substance abuse.

#### ***Relationships***

If you are not around those who use substances, this then reduces the accessibility or chances of seeing someone else using. Having parental involvement as well as a supportive group of family and friends can also reduce the risk of substance abuse (SAMHSA, n.d).

Moreover, other things, such as peer or mentoring programs, can contribute to the protective factor.

### *Community*

Protective factors for the community can be various and reach many people if there are youth centers, homeless shelters, food banks, and neighborhood watches. Faith-based resources, such as youth programs, retreats/camps, church services, and more, can also be used (SAMHSA, n.n.). Additionally, having easy access to medical care and doctors who do not overprescribe narcotics can help decrease the risk of substance use.

### *Society*

Protective factors in society are already in place, such as laws or policies limiting the availability of substances and anti-drug policies (CDC, n.d.; SAMHSA, n.d. a). Society must also have an effective prescription monitoring system, as that can reduce certain risk factors. Additionally, help for those suffering from substance abuse can help decrease the risk as it will also reduce the stigma around substance abuse.

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## PART 3: THEORIES OF PREVENTION

### Preventing Substance Use and Related Negative Outcomes in Jackson County, OR

With the rapid increase in substance abuse disorders, it is vital that prevention measures increase as well. Understanding the theories behind prevention is crucial as it allows for effective programs that reduce risk (National Cancer Institute (NIC), 2005). Theories are a way to predict or explain events or situations and the different variables that come into play. They allow us to

look at the bigger picture and then allow for insights into specific problems (NIC, 2005). For prevention measures to work, it is best to use proven methods and theories.

### **Theory of Planned Behavior**

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) examines the associations between an individual's beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behavior (NIC, 2005). TPB also looks at perceived behavioral control (PBC), which is the belief that an individual can control risky behavior. TPB helps us to understand how and why people behave as they do. It is a common theoretical framework for predicting behavior and is suitable for the framework of prevention programs (Lin et al., 2021). TPB has been successfully applied to the study of many risky behaviors, such as reckless driving, unsafe sex practices, drinking, driving while intoxicated, and substance abuse.

TPB posits that there is a circular chain of beliefs, attitudes, and intentions that drive behavior. Attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control combine to influence an individual's intention to engage in risky behavior. Moreover, the connection can be described as “behavioral intention influenced by a person's attitude toward performing a behavior, and by beliefs about whether individuals who are important to the person approve or disapprove of the behavior (subjective norm)” (NIC, 2005, p.18). There have been several studies that have shown that attitudes and PBC are good predictors of intentions (Abad S.S.M.M. et al., 2017; Earle et al., 2020; Lawental et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2021; Jeihooni et al., 2019). Preventative measures cost less than treatments and can decrease the likelihood of substance abuse.

### **Evidence-Based-Program**

School- and family-based programs are two program types that are effective in preventing drug abuse. To reach a multitude of those in Southern Oregon, it is best to offer programs that reach multiple ages. The Botvin LifeSkills Training (LST) targets preventing drug

use of children in school (elementary, middle, and high school). LST provides education about the consequences of substance abuse and the skills necessary to handle challenging situations successfully. LST has been proven to reduce the risks of alcohol, tobacco, drug abuse, and violence by targeting the factors that promote the initiation of risky behavior, including substance abuse. They do not just focus on the dangers of drug use but promote healthy alternatives through various activities that are designed to help resist social pressures, develop self-esteem and confidence, cope with anxiety, increase social skills, and develop self-management skills.

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## PART 4: DIVERSITY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Preventing Substance Use and Related Negative Outcomes in Jackson County, OR

According to the US Census (n.d.), around 50,000 of the 229,000 Jackson County, OR residents are under twenty. Oregon ranks first in the nation for the percentage of the population with an illicit drug use disorder aged 12 and older (Lenahan, 2022). Jackson County has a large population of American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN), with Oregon federally recognizing nine tribal nations. Closest to Jackson County are the Klamath, Modoc, Takelma, Shasta, and Cow Creek Band of Umpqua tribes. To help those being impacted by substance abuse disorders, we need to focus prevention measures on those under the age of twenty in Jackson County, with a particular focus on those of AI/AN descent.

There is a growing occurrence of substance use and other behavioral addictions in the AI/AN communities and deep generational trauma that has led to various health disparities (Whelshula et al., 2021; Soto et al., 2022; Komro et al., 2023). How, then, can we come to help those in the AI/AN community when it comes to substance abuse? We need to consider our

biases and implement interventions and initiatives in a culturally respectful manner (Soto et al., 2022). The various tribal communities have repeatedly been asked to take surveys but have seen little to no results from the answers about how they can be helped (Kelly et al., 2018, as cited in Whelshula et al., 2021).

### **Increase the Cultural Relevance**

Culture impacts help-seeking behaviors, so we must adapt evidence-based practices (EBPs) to address culture-specific needs (SAMHSA, n.d. b). Those of AI/AN descent often come from families that have suffered from substance abuse, and because of this, the prevention must include the wider community. We can reach out to tribal elders and those in the AI/AN community who have been through substance abuse programs to ask them what would have prevented them from using/starting. We can also introduce cultural teachings to make them relevant to the AI/AN youths (Whelshula et al., 2021). When introducing the *LifeSkills* training during school, we must also consider the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) ethical standards for school counselors (2022) and respect the AI/AN culture. By collaborating with the various AI/AN communities, we can ensure that the prevention measure reaches the youths who could be most at risk.

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## **PART 5: ADVOCACY**

### **Preventing Substance Use and Related Negative Outcomes in Jackson County, OR**

Advocacy comes in many forms, whether for another person, to bring about change at a systemic level, or to advocate for yourself and your needs. However, some deterrents can impact advocacy. When it comes to preventing substance use and related negative outcomes in Jackson County, OR, some barriers need to be addressed. According to Ratts et al. (2015), counselors are

to intervene on behalf of clients at certain levels, including institutional, community, and public policy.

## **Barriers**

### ***Institutional Level***

The institutional level comprises social institutions such as schools, churches, rehabilitation facilities, hospitals, and community organizations (Ratts et al., 2015). A common barrier at this level would be accessing these and getting care. It can be challenging to get an appointment as many places are understaffed and overbooked when it comes to getting care.

### ***Community Level***

The community level is comprised of the values that the community holds. Sadly, the legalization of certain substances, such as marijuana, has led to acceptance of it at a young age. Additionally, it is easy to obtain and use even in vape form. Children who do have good role models but see the adults around them use substances are more likely to use them as well (SAMHSA, 2020).

### ***Public Policy Level***

Oregon has decriminalized small amounts of illegal drugs such as heroin, fentanyl, and cocaine as long as it is for personal use and not for selling. This has caused an increase in substance abuse and an increase in other crimes. Along with legalizing marijuana, the chance of seeing substance use has increased exponentially.

## **Advocacy Actions**

### ***Institutional Level and Community Level***

At these levels, one action to take is to lobby for more resources to help with substance abuse in Jackson County. If more providers can be trained to help those with substance issues,

then there would be more available care for those suffering. Additionally, giving resources to school counselors to help with prevention measures would be beneficial as it would reduce the need for so many providers as it could prevent the use. Providing more substance abuse prevention measures can help reduce the use for all in the community.

### ***Public Policy Level***

At this level, the best way to advocate for change is to lobby state lawmakers to repeal Measure 110. This is the measure that approved the drug decriminalization. This measure was supposed to help focus on treatment programs, but they have been slow to start due to COVID. Additionally, it took away the power of law enforcement to have people go to jail, where they would get drug treatment. Lobbying for change can hopefully repeal the measure before the damage is irreversible.

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