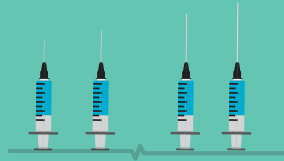


Opioid and tobacco use have created a dual health crisis in Indiana. While the state has taken important steps to address these epidemics, they still claim thousands of Hoosier lives and cost billions of dollars each year.

- In 2017, more than **1,700 Hoosiers** died from a drug overdose, an all-time high and a **75% increase** since 2011.



- Tobacco use is **seven times as deadly**, causing more than **12,500 premature deaths** in Indiana every year.



Indiana taxpayers and businesses **pay more than \$8.3 billion annually** in healthcare costs and lost productivity due to tobacco consumption and secondhand smoke. In 2017, the state's opioid epidemic added another **\$4.3 billion** in economic damages.



Tobacco and opioid use are **two leading root causes** of Indiana's poor health rankings and affect all Hoosiers—either by impacting their health or their wallets. These two public health challenges can only be effectively addressed with action by all stakeholders. Indiana colleges and universities can tackle opioid and tobacco use by pursuing a number of proven strategies.

Recommendations for Addressing Opioid Misuse

- **Implementing programs to address opioid misuse among students:** Higher education institutions are highly familiar with substance misuse among young adults, as college is a time when considerable experimentation with alcohol and drugs occurs. Every college or university has some policies related to substance use. However, these programs focus mostly on alcohol or marijuana use. Programs should be implemented specifically to address opioid misuse among students. These programs should include harm reduction strategies, such as naloxone availability, to help mitigate negative consequences related to substance misuse.
- **Training more medical and behavioral specialists:** Colleges and universities must make a meaningful commitment to admit and train the medical and behavioral workforce needed to address workforce shortages and increase access to treatment. They can do this by incorporating education about substance use disorder (SUD) into curricula and offering specialty training in addiction for students seeking degrees in medicine, psychology, social work and nursing. They can also create incentives to attract more students into these professions, including scholarships and student loan repayment opportunities.

Recommendations for Curbing Tobacco Use

- **Adopting nicotine-free policies:** Colleges and universities can play a role in reducing tobacco consumption by adopting comprehensive nicotine-free policies. Such measures help protect employees and students from exposure to secondhand smoke.

They also reduce the social acceptability of nicotine use in all its forms, including e-cigarettes. As part of nicotine-free policies, colleges should also provide students and employees with effective tobacco cessation resources to help them quit.

Sources

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