

Opioid addiction

is not an abstract crisis—it is a daily emergency touching families, workplaces, schools, and faith communities across Brockton, all of Massachusetts, and the world. Outlets for Hope, Inc. exists to stand in that gap with practical help and hope-centered recovery supports for people and families affected by substance use.[cdc+1](#)

1. What Are Opioids—and Why Are They So Risky?

Opioids are drugs that act on the brain's opioid receptors to reduce pain and create a powerful sense of relief or euphoria. When misused, they change the brain's wiring, making it hard to feel normal without them and driving compulsive use despite harm.[cdc](#)

Major opioid categories:

- **Prescription opioids**
 - Examples: oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet), hydrocodone (Vicodin), morphine, hydromorphone, codeine.[cdc](#)
 - Often started for pain after surgery, injury, or chronic conditions—but higher doses or long-term use sharply increase risk of dependence and overdose.[cdc](#)
- **Heroin**
 - An illegal opioid often used when prescription pills become too expensive or hard to get.[cdc](#)
 - Highly addictive and frequently mixed with other drugs, raising overdose risk.[cdc](#)
- **Synthetic opioids (especially fentanyl)**
 - Fentanyl is 50–100 times stronger than morphine; illicitly manufactured fentanyl now drives most overdose deaths in the U.S.[cdc](#)
 - In Massachusetts, fentanyl was present in 93% of opioid-related overdose deaths in 2023.[mass](#)

Opioids can slow breathing and heart rate; in overdose, a person can stop breathing altogether, leading to brain damage or death within minutes if naloxone is not given.[cdc](#)

2. How Opioid Addiction Hurts People and Families

a. The Human Impact

Opioid use disorder (OUD) is a chronic medical condition, not a moral failure. It changes stress, reward, and self-control pathways in the brain, making quitting incredibly hard without support. People living with OUD often describe:[cdc](#)

- Needing more pills or powder just to feel “normal”
- Losing jobs, housing, and relationships
- Hiding use from family out of shame
- Surviving multiple overdoses or seeing friends die

Families experience constant fear, financial strain, and grief. Children may face instability, missed school, or entry into foster care.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](#)

b. Impact on Pregnant Women and Babies

Using opioids during pregnancy—whether prescribed or illicit—can harm both parent and baby.

- Pregnant people using opioids are at higher risk of overdose, infections, poor prenatal care, and complications like preterm birth.[cdc](#)
- Babies exposed in the womb can develop **Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome (NOWS)**, with symptoms such as irritability, feeding difficulties, tremors, and breathing problems after birth.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](#)
- NOWS rates in the U.S. increased roughly fivefold between 2004 and 2014, reflecting rising use in pregnancy.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](#)

Importantly, **treatment is safer than stopping abruptly**: medications like methadone or buprenorphine, combined with prenatal care and counseling, reduce overdose risk and support healthier pregnancies.[cdc](#)

Outlets for Hope, Inc. encourages pregnant women in Brockton to seek help early—without shame—so both parent and baby can be protected.[mass](#)

3. Costs to Brockton, Massachusetts, the U.S., and the World

a. Brockton and Local Communities

Brockton lies in Plymouth County, where suspected opioid-related overdose deaths remained high in 2024, even as some statewide numbers began to decline. Communities across the South Shore have seen:[plymouthda](#)

- Repeated overdoses in homes, parks, and public bathrooms
- Strain on families, first responders, shelters, and sober homes
- Lost workers in construction, healthcare, retail, and transportation sectors[heller.brandeis](#)

Local analyses show opioid overdoses cluster in neighborhoods facing poverty, housing instability, and historical inequities—meaning the crisis hits already-burdened families the hardest.[heller.brandeis](#)

b. Massachusetts

Massachusetts has been one of the hardest-hit states in the nation.

- In 2023, there were 2,125 confirmed and estimated opioid-related overdose deaths statewide—a rate of about 30.2 deaths per 100,000 residents, still far above pre-epidemic levels.[mass](#)
- While 2023 deaths were about 10% lower than in 2022, fentanyl remained involved in the vast majority of fatalities, showing that the crisis is shifting—not over.[mass](#)
- The Commonwealth spends hundreds of millions of dollars annually on emergency care, treatment, child welfare, and criminal-legal responses related to opioid use.[mass](#)

c. United States

Across the U.S., the opioid epidemic remains one of the deadliest public health crises in history.

- More than 80,000 people died from opioid overdoses in 2022 alone, the highest number on record.[cdc](#)
- Recent economic analyses estimate that each case of opioid use disorder carries an average lifetime societal cost close to \$700,000, including lost productivity, health care, criminal-legal costs, and reduced quality of life.[axios](#)

- The total economic burden of the illicit opioid epidemic in the U.S. is measured in **trillions** of dollars when lost work, caregiving, and premature deaths are included.[whitehouse](#)

d. Global Perspective

The opioid crisis is not just American.

- In 2019, an estimated 40.5 million people worldwide were living with opioid use disorder, and opioids accounted for about two-thirds of all deaths related to drug use.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](#)
- Global burden-of-disease modeling shows that opioid dependence and overdose contribute millions of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), particularly in North America, Eastern Europe, and parts of Oceania.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](#)

Many countries also rely on opioids for legitimate pain control, which means public-health responses must carefully balance **access to pain relief** with **prevention of misuse and addiction**.[sciencedirect](#)

4. How Opioids Damage the Labor Force and Health System

a. Labor Force and Local Economies

Opioid addiction drains communities of their workers, caregivers, and creators.

- People with OUD are more likely to miss work, lose jobs, or leave the labor force entirely, especially in physically demanding industries like construction and manufacturing.[axios](#)
- Counties with higher opioid prescribing and overdose rates have documented lower labor-force participation, more workplace injuries, and higher disability claims.[cdc](#)
- Employers face rising costs from absenteeism, healthcare premiums, workers' compensation, and training replacements.[axios](#)

In cities like Brockton—already carrying economic and racial disparities—ongoing loss of workers to addiction and early death makes it harder to build stable businesses and safe neighborhoods.[heller.brandeis](#)

b. Health-Care Systems

Opioid misuse stresses every level of the health system:

- Emergency departments treat repeated overdoses and infections such as endocarditis and skin/soft-tissue infections from injection drug use.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)
- Hospital admissions for opioid-related complications and withdrawal occupy limited beds and staff time, increasing costs for everyone.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)
- Behavioral health clinics and primary-care practices must manage complex co-occurring conditions such as depression, PTSD, chronic pain, and housing instability.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

Innovations like **mobile addiction treatment and harm-reduction services** have been shown to improve engagement and reduce emergency-department use, but they require sustained funding and community trust.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

5. Getting Help: Treatment Works and Recovery Is Possible

Outlets for Hope, Inc. (OFH) recognizes that substance use is often rooted in trauma, poverty, social isolation, and unmet mental-health needs. In response, OFH promotes **holistic, dignity-centered supports** that combine:[samhsa](https://samhsa.gov)

- Compassionate listening and peer mentorship
- Connection to evidence-based treatment
- Spiritual and emotional support for individuals and families

a. Evidence-Based Treatment Options

National and state guidelines emphasize that opioid use disorder is treatable, and combining medications with counseling offers the best outcomes.[cdc+1](https://cdc.gov)

Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD):

- **Buprenorphine (Suboxone, Subutex):**
 - Reduces cravings and withdrawal; can be prescribed in office-based settings.[cdc](https://cdc.gov)
- **Methadone:**
 - A long-acting opioid agonist dispensed in specialized clinics; stabilizes brain chemistry and reduces overdose risk.[cdc](https://cdc.gov)
- **Naltrexone (Vivitrol):**

- An opioid blocker available as a monthly injection; helps prevent relapse after detox for some individuals.[cdc](#)

These medications cut overdose deaths by more than half and improve retention in treatment compared to counseling alone.[cdc](#)

Counseling and Whole-Person Care:

- Individual and group therapy (including cognitive-behavioral and trauma-informed approaches) to build coping skills and address grief, shame, and family dynamics.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](#)
- Peer recovery coaching, which connects people with others who have walked the same road and found recovery.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](#)
- Wrap-around supports: help with housing, employment, childcare, and transportation, which are critical for long-term success.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](#)

b. Harm Reduction Saves Lives

Not everyone is ready or able to stop using immediately. Public-health experts emphasize that **keeping people alive is the first step toward any recovery.**[cdc](#)

Key harm-reduction tools include:

- **Naloxone (Narcan):** a life-saving medication that reverses opioid overdoses; available without a prescription in Massachusetts pharmacies and through many community programs.[mass](#)
- **Fentanyl test strips:** to help people detect fentanyl in street drugs and adjust use to reduce overdose risk.[cdc](#)
- **Syringe-service programs:** providing sterile supplies, HIV/HCV testing, and referrals to treatment.[pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](#)

Outlets for Hope, Inc. supports collaborations with local partners to expand life-saving tools while offering pathways into treatment and community support.[mass+1](#)

6. Where to Turn for Help in Brockton, Massachusetts, and Beyond

If you or someone you love is struggling with opioids, you are not alone—and help is available right now.

a. Immediate Crisis and Emotional Support

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**
 - Call or text **988** any time, day or night, to connect with trained counselors for thoughts of self-harm, overdose fears, or emotional crisis.[samhsa](#)
- **National SAMHSA Helpline**
 - Call **1-800-662-HELP (4357)** for confidential, free treatment referrals and information on mental and substance use disorders, available 24/7 in English and Spanish.[samhsa](#)

b. Massachusetts and Brockton-Area Resources

- **Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line**
 - The state operates a 24/7 helpline connecting residents to mental health and substance-use services, including in-person, telehealth, and crisis stabilization programs.[mass](#)
- **Statewide Substance Use Resources (Mass.gov)**
 - The Commonwealth lists detox programs, residential treatment, outpatient clinics, recovery centers, and harm-reduction services searchable by city and county.[mass](#)
- **Local recovery housing and sober-living programs in Brockton**
 - Brockton hosts multiple sober-living homes and peer-led programs that support early recovery with structure, accountability, and community.[vanderburghhouse](#)

Outlets for Hope, Inc. can help you navigate these options, figure out what level of care makes sense, and connect you with faith- and community-based supports that respect your story and culture.[samhsa](#)

7. How Outlets for Hope, Inc. Fits In

Outlets for Hope, Inc. is committed to:

- **Breaking isolation** by creating safe spaces—support groups, workshops, and outreach—for people who feel ashamed or alone in their struggle.[samhsa](#)

- **Linking individuals and families** to professional treatment, recovery housing, and evidence-based services while providing spiritual and emotional encouragement.[samhsa](#)
- **Educating churches, schools, and community organizations** about addiction as a health condition and equipping them to respond with compassion and practical support rather than stigma.[samhsa](#)
- **Advocating for hope-affirming policies** in Brockton and across Massachusetts that expand access to harm reduction, treatment, and recovery opportunities.[mass](#)

Our message is simple: **you are more than your addiction, and your life is worth fighting for.**

8. What You Can Do Today

Whether you are a person who uses opioids, a loved one, or a community ally in Brockton, you can take action:

- **If you use opioids:**
 - Carry naloxone; do not use alone; test your supply for fentanyl when possible; and reach out to a trusted person or organization about treatment options.[cdc](#)
- **If you are a family member or friend:**
 - Learn about OUD as a medical condition; keep naloxone at home; set compassionate boundaries; and seek your own support—no one should carry this alone.[cdc](#)
- **If you are a community leader, employer, or faith leader:**
 - Host naloxone trainings; build recovery-friendly workplace policies; partner with organizations like Outlets for Hope, Inc. to create stigma-free spaces for people to ask for help.[mass+1](#)

Outlets for Hope, Inc. stands with Brockton and communities everywhere facing the weight of the opioid crisis. By telling the truth about the dangers, honoring the dignity of every person, and connecting people to real resources, we believe **recovery is possible and hope is stronger than heroin or fentanyl will ever be.**[mass+1](#)

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2. <https://www.samhsa.gov>
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