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Spokane County Community Coalition COVID-19 Support for Families

**Spokane, WA:** As the COVID-19 crisis halts school, many businesses and gatherings, local community coalitions are engaging in a variety of innovative ways to continue providing support and youth substance use prevention services for families. From social media, to virtual parenting courses and meetings, Community Prevention and Wellness Initiative (CPWI) coalitions across Spokane County are working to help their school districts and local organizations endure. CPWI is funded by the Washington State Health Care Authority.

Coordinators have taken to Facebook to rally community members, posting and sharing online and other virtual resources to handle the ongoing epidemic. Parents can visit spokaneprevention.com to access the coalition pages and receive resources regarding parenting, grocery shopping and other food assistance, childcare, etc. While this may not look like traditional substance use prevention, local coordinators and coalitions want to make sure they’re still a trusted resource for the community.

The Shadle Prevention and Wellness Coalition (SPWC) is hoping to make in-person trainings and presentations about a variety of topics available via recordings or Facebook Live. Coordinator Elysia Spencer said “Our goal during this time is to promote healthy family communication and relationships during this difficult time.” You can check out her extensive list of Spokane stores offering special shopping hours for people vulnerable to COVID-19 and other resources on the SPWC Facebook Page. West Spokane Wellness Partnership (WSWP) in West Central is also updating their social media with information and tools for parents regarding school disruption and community services available during this stressful time.

Take Action and Link Kids to Healthy Choices (TALK 2 Healthy Choices), the coalition for Cheney and Airway Heights is using their youth club, High School Health Helpers (H^3), to help promote resources and support available for youth. As they get their social media accounts up and running, the group is hoping to share information with their fellow students during National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week (<https://teens.drugabuse.gov/national-drug-alcohol-facts-week>) March 30 – April 2.

Northeast Support Team Coalition (NEST) is working closely with their community partners, including the ZONE Project, Spokane Police Department and Planned Parenthood to provide families with up to date information about available services and locking up their prescription medications.

Thousands of students have been accessing lunch sites across the county, and East Valley Community Coalition (EVCC) plans to take advantage of this by also providing those students with resources and materials to take home. Coalition Coordinator Kirsten Fuchs said “We want families to know we’re still here for them, even if we’re unable to hold education nights, programs in the school or other in-person meetings. We know this is a very stressful time and we want to help anyone who has kids at home access the tools to they need to have conversations about things like drugs and alcohol. Parents and caregivers are the number one influence on their kids, and right now is the perfect time to have family meetings to set those clear standards.”

Additionally, Spokane County Coalition Coordinators are still promoting key messages about opioid misuse prevention, even though National Take Back Day planned for April 25th has been cancelled by the DEA. They are emphasizing the importance of locking up medications, especially as more families are homebound; promoting permanent Take Back sites and mail-in return where available; and supporting National Take Back Day as an awareness day, helping families keep prevention in mind, especially when our communities need it most.

For more information about locking up your medications or permanent take back locations visit <https://www.getthefactsrx.com/> and <http://www.takebackyourmeds.org/> for a location near you.

Coalition Coordinators recommend you take the time to talk to your children about COVID-19 in developmentally appropriate ways and use the time to also talk to them about substance use.

Talking to kids about COVID-19:

* While children are at a low risk for being infected, they may still be vulnerable to its emotional impacts. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/StartTalkingNowWA/> or <https://www.starttalkingnow.org/> for tips.
* Parents should take care of their own mental health right now during this stressful time and model those healthy habits. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) - Taking care of your behavioral health: Tips for social distancing, quarantine, and isolation during an infectious disease outbreak <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-social-distancing-quarantine-isolation-031620.pdf>
* Have an honest conversation with your children about COVID-19. Tell them if you’re scared or tell them you’re not scared. Tell them the truth: <http://SADD.org/news/covid-19>.

Substance Use:

* Have a conversation, not a confrontation. Visit <https://drugfree.org/> for direction, personalized help and step-by-step tips for guiding your children through the tough conversations.
* Download the FREE “Talk. They Hear You.” App from the Apple Store, Google Play or Windows Store to practice the important conversations about underage drinking and drug use. Practice bringing up the topic and learn the right questions to ask. <https://www.starttalkingnow.org/our-efforts/practice-talking-your-kids-new-mobile-app>
* Visit <https://notmykid.org/> for parent guide’s about drug use, alcohol, depression, bullying and even internet safety.

Spokane County Community Coalitions are here for you.

**About Spokane County Prevention Coalitions:** Spokane County is home to five community prevention coalitions. Coalitions use a variety of strategies to promote prevention in their communities based on the current needs. This includes programs like parenting classes, youth prevention activities at local high schools, and large public awareness campaigns including prescription drug takeback events.

For more information about the five Spokane County Community Coalitions and to join a virtual meeting visit <https://spokaneprevention.com/>. To contact the Spokane County Coalition Coordinators email SpokanePrevention@gmail.com.

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