

NEWS RELEASE

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Surgeon General Issues Landmark Report on Alcohol, Other Drugs and Health

COLUMBIA, S.C. – A new Surgeon General's report finds alcohol and other drug misuse and severe substance use disorders, commonly called addiction, to be one of America's most pressing public health concerns. Nearly 21 million Americans – more than the number of people who have all cancers combined – suffer from substance use disorders.

"Alcohol and drug addiction take an enormous toll on individuals, families, and communities," said U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy. "Most Americans know someone who has been touched by an alcohol or drug use disorder. Yet 90 percent of people with a substance use disorder are not getting treatment. That has to change."

Today's report, *Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health*, marks the first time a U.S. Surgeon General has dedicated a report to substance misuse and related disorders. The report addresses alcohol, illicit drugs, and prescription drug misuse, with chapters dedicated to neurobiology, prevention, treatment, recovery, health systems integration, and recommendations for the future. It provides an in-depth look at the science of substance use disorders and addiction, calls for a cultural shift in the way Americans talk about the issue, and recommends actions we can take to prevent and treat these conditions, and promote recovery.

"The use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs affects South Carolinians of all ages and from all walks of life," commented **Sara Goldsby, Acting Director of the S.C. Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services**. "We estimate that approximately 386,000 individuals in South Carolina are suffering from substance abuse problems that require immediate intervention and treatment."

One in seven people in the United States is expected to develop a substance use disorder at some point in their lives. Yet only one in 10 receives treatment. Among other things, the report shows that substance use disorders typically develop over time following repeated episodes of misuse that result in changes to the brain circuitry.

The report makes clear that substance misuse – which includes use of a substance in any way that can cause harm to oneself or others – is an underappreciated but critical public health challenge that can lead to substance use disorders, such as addiction. In 2015, nearly 48 million Americans used an illicit drug or misused a prescription medication, approximately 67 million reported binge drinking in the past month, and nearly 28 million self-reported driving under the influence in the past year. This large, at-risk population of Americans can benefit from appropriate screening, prevention, and treatment services.

The report identifies substance use disorders as a public health problem that requires a public health solution. It recommends taking action by eradicating negative attitudes and changing the way people think about substance use disorders; recognizing substance misuse and intervening early; and expanding access to treatment. "It's time to change how we view addiction," said Dr. Murthy. "Not as a moral failing but as a chronic illness that must be treated with skill, urgency, and compassion. The way we address this crisis is a test for America."

For the full report and executive summary, visit <http://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/>.

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The mission of DAODAS is to support healthy individuals, healthy families, and healthy communities. A cabinet agency, DAODAS is charged with ensuring quality services to prevent or reduce the negative consequences of substance use and addictions.