

Real Talks Wisconsin

It takes all of us to help prevent
and reduce substance use.



Backgrounder: Changing the Conversation on Drugs

Real Talks Wisconsin launched in 2022 as an initiative to address growing rates of substance use and related injuries. It is an effort of the Department of Health Services and Department of Justice.

What is the purpose of Real Talks Wisconsin?

Real Talks Wisconsin promotes conversations on the health and safety impacts of substance use in order to build supportive communities where prevention works, treatment is available, and recovery can happen for everyone.

Why is Real Talks Wisconsin needed?

Although substance use is common in Wisconsin, it's often not talked about or gets dismissed because of feelings of shame or wrongdoing. This stigma can prevent people from seeking help.

Supportive, stigma-free environments focused on hope and healing are possible all across Wisconsin. How? By having real talks.

What are real talks?

Real talks are frequent open, honest, and caring conversations about substance use. Real talks are based on asking open-ended questions, having empathy, and helping to problem solve. They are the foundation of individual and community health and well-being.

Transforming how Wisconsin views substance use

Real Talks Wisconsin is multi-year effort to change perceptions about substance use.

Current perception	Desired perception
Problems with substance use only happen to certain kinds of people and are a result of someone's own choices.	Substance use disorders can happen to anyone, no matter their race, upbringing, personality type, income, etc. There are genetic, social, and psychological risk factors that can put some people at greater risk. Substance use has nothing to do with a person's character.
People with substance use disorders will never recover.	Substance use disorders are medical conditions. They can be treated like other medical conditions. People can reduce harm and recover from substance use disorders every day. Recovery looks different for each person.
There is nothing I can do to reduce and prevent the harms of substance use.	Everyone has a role in preventing and reducing substance use. One part of this role is having Real Talks.