What is the Opioid EPIDEMIC?
Grades 7-8
1-2 Class Periods

Program Segment(s)
- The Demand for Opioids (approximately 15 minutes)

Objectives
Students will be able to
- Define opioid and epidemic.
- Recognize what factors lead to an epidemic.

Instructional Resources
- Understanding the Opioid Epidemic
- Definitions of opioid and epidemic
- Internet access

Procedures
1. The teacher will read the definitions of opioid and epidemic, then post them somewhere easily seen in the classroom. The teacher will make it clear that when talking about the “opioid epidemic,” that refers to opioid addiction as being epidemic, also that opioid addiction is a disease.

Opioid (as defined by the National Institute on Drug Abuse)
Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illegal drug heroin, synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and pain relievers available legally by prescription. These drugs are chemically related and interact with opioid receptors on nerve cells in the body and brain. Opioid pain relievers are generally safe when taken for a short time and as prescribed by a doctor, but they can be misused (taken in a different way or in a larger quantity than prescribed, or taken without a doctor’s prescription). Regular use—even as prescribed by a doctor—can lead to dependence and, when misused, opioid pain relievers can lead to overdose incidents and deaths.

Epidemic (as defined by Dictionary.com)
- a widespread occurrence of a disease
- a rapid development, spread, or growth of something, especially something unpleasant
2. The teacher will share some other historical epidemics providing as much or little information about each as time permits (left up to the teacher). Some other epidemics are Polio, Typhus, AIDS, Malaria, Cholera, Small Pox, Yellow Fever, The Black Death, and Tuberculosis.

3. Students will watch the segment from *Understanding the Opioid Epidemic* and take notes.

4. The students will then be given time to research the opioid epidemic and what factors led to the current national crisis. Some questions students should be looking to include are:
   - What factors contributed to the rise of the opioid epidemic?
   - In what geographical areas does the opioid epidemic exist?
   - What was the rate of increase of deaths from opioid addiction?

5. A one-page essay should be written, based on their research, explaining the opioid epidemic.

**Assessment Task**

Students will complete a one-page research paper.

**Adaptations (Grades 9-12)**

- Students will write a longer paper that includes a comparison of the opioid epidemic to another historical epidemic. The paper should include a chart that shows the impact of each epidemic. The comparison should include rate and depth of the rising of the epidemic, also demographic it affected/affects.

**National Health Standards**

- Standard 1 - Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.
- Standard 3 - Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to enhance health.
- Standard 8 - Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.