

# WVDII

WEST VIRGINIA  
DRUG INTERVENTION INSTITUTE



**W V D I I**

Educating West Virginians  
about safe medication use  
across the life span.

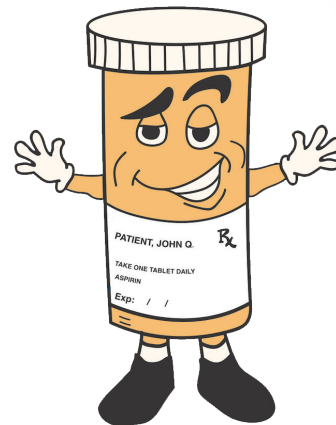
[www.wvdii.org](http://www.wvdii.org)

# PRE-K & KINDERGARTEN

## Don't Keep Rx Around™ Medication Safety Program

### About the Program

Co-created by our president, Dr. Susan Bissett and Joe Murphy, CEO of Murphy Media in 2017, the **Don't Keep Rx Around™ Medication Safety Program** is a curriculum and public health campaign that utilizes evidence-based practices to teach medication safety to pre-k and kindergarten students and their families throughout West Virginia.



Using an animated character developed by Murphy Media, Rex™ the Rx, WV DII staff visit elementary classrooms across the state to talk to children about medication safety. This innovative approach to educating students about the dangers of misusing prescription medications provides opportunities for both in classroom and distance education and is based on WV Pre-K Education Standards. In addition to the presentation and interactive media, the WV DII provides each school with curricular materials and allotment of medication disposal systems.

To date over **4,000 pre-k students in six counties** have been educated through the Don't Keep Rx Around™ Medication Safety School-Based Program. Due to COVID-19, WV DII worked with Murphy Media to reengineer the program to a virtual platform reaching over **40,000 households in 13 of West Virginia's 55 counties in Spring 2020**. We are planning to continue both school-based and online engagement in the coming academic year.

## ELEMENTARY OUTREACH

### SmartRx™

The WV DII, with the help of student pharmacists from the University of Charleston delivers medication safety programming to third grade students in Kanawha and Putnam County. Each year, over 1,600 students are educated on prescription and over-the-counter medication safety and proper asthma inhaler use.



Adapting messaging from Generation Rx, an evidence-based program developed in collaboration of The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy, the Cardinal Health Foundation, and the American Pharmacists Association. The program is designed to increase public awareness of prescription drug abuse and better equip children, youth, teens, and adults to address and actively prevent prescription drug misuse.

In 2020 and 2021, the WV DII has once again partnered with Murphy Media to create videos and resources for teachers to share without the need for student pharmacists to be physically present in the classroom. Using the Rex™ avatar with glasses, the program is being rebranded as SmartRx™. The adjustment addresses concerns about social distancing and also will allow the WV DII to expand our reach beyond Putnam and Kanawha Counties.

## Opioid Epidemic West Virginia

*"In March 2018, a study published in the journal, Pediatrics indicated that the annual rate of hospitalizations for opioid poisonings in children doubled between 2004 and 2015."*

*- Dr. Susan Bissett, WV DII President.*

## COLLEGE STUDENTS

By the time children reach college, sharing and misusing prescription drugs has become normalized. However, opioids aren't the only problem. Almost 16% of college students say they misuse prescription stimulants according to the 2018 Prescription Drug Study led by researchers at The Ohio State University.

*"A majority of students who misuse prescription drugs—including 79% of stimulant users, 59% of sedative users, and 51% of pain medication users—said they obtained the drugs from friends."*

WV DII, with support from the Maier Foundation and collaboration with the Southern WV Collegiate Recovery Program and the WV Higher Education Policy Commission, is working to bring SmartRx™ University to all public and private 2 and 4-year campuses in West Virginia by 2022. College students will be trained to deliver the program on their campuses and serve as SmartRx™ Ambassadors for the state of West Virginia.

## PARENTS & PROFESSIONALS

The WV DII has created a number of resources for parents as well. This includes online courses for peer recovery support specialists, parents and grandparents, and medical professionals.

Resources and modules are designed to help train persons on proper Naloxone Use, the overlooked dangers of over-the-counter medications (OTCs), proper medication storage and disposal, and eliminating the stigma of addiction and recovery (including reducing stigma associated with medically assisted therapy or MAT).



## Opioid Epidemic West Virginia

*"We know that the average age of prescription or illicit drug (mis) use is between nine and twelve years old. This makes early education about medication safety so important—especially in West Virginia where we are ground zero for the nation's opioid epidemic."*

*- Dr. Susan Bissett, WV DII President.*



## WV DII & FRUTH PHARMACY

As a result of COVID-19, we have went back to the roots of the “Rex™” Program—innovation. Don’t Keep Rx Around™ will be live streaming in schools throughout West Virginia during 2020 and 2021.



*Your Hometown, Family Pharmacy.*

In addition, we have partnered with Fruth Pharmacy to education persons across the life span—children, parents, and grandparents—about the importance of safe medication use, storage, and disposal.

The WV DII is working with Fruth to develop a pilot program for 2021 that will provide both a medication disposal kit and naloxone to patients when an opioid is dispensed. Research indicates that safe medication disposal (removing expired and unused medications from the home) and a co-prescription of naloxone with opioid prescriptions reduces fatal and non-fatal overdoses.



# S.P.A.R.C.

## Seeking Positive Alternative Realities Creatively

### About the Program

Research indicates that virtual reality (VR) is a tool for treating diseases of addiction and mental health. Currently the West Virginia Drug Intervention Institute (WV DII) is researching ways in which VR could be used not only to treat addiction but train persons to administer naloxone, address stress for first responders, and teach young people about the importance of medication safety.

In addition, utilizing an evidence-based foundational theory—Positive Youth Development Theory—we believe that VR can be a method for helping young persons to find alternatives to substance use. Together, with Murphy Media, the WV DII is examining ways to expand their educational programs—Don't Keep Rx Around®, SmartRx®, and SmartRx University®—to include VR components in which students are actively engaged in making safe medication choices. The program is entitled, "Seeking Positive Alternative Realities Creatively or SPARC."

## VIRTUAL REALITY IN TREATMENT OF ADDICTION

Often dangerous drugs are used to alter one's reality. VR flips the switch by allowing young people to alter their reality creatively and in a positive way. Additionally, VR is one way to strengthen cognitive and emotional skills of young persons, so that they are at less risk for a developmental path that includes social or behavioral problems or risk-taking behaviors.

This exhibit is designed to showcase the uses of VR from a historical perspective. Throughout time, human beings have sought alternative realities during times of isolation. During periods in our history, when persons have felt most isolated, new technology was created to alter our reality, entertain us, and counteract isolation. Consider the stereoscope during the 1918 Flu Pandemic, for example. Persons were stuck at home in quarantine. Ironically during that time, America was also in midst of another opioid epidemic that began with the misuse of opioid medications in the early 1900s. The Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914 tightened regulations related to opioids requiring registration and tax on opioid manufacturers. However, the legislation did not curb opioid abuse. In fact, by 1918, many Americans had turned to illicit drugs including heroin to numb the pain of isolation.





Since the 1900s, many attempts at altered reality have been made. From the stereoscope and view finders to hand-held video games and online gaming, technology has been used to connect human beings to each other, transport people to other places, and alter their reality. While technology has expanded and improved exponentially, the goal remains the same—positive human connection.

“Author Johann Hari has been quoted as saying ‘The opposite of addiction is connection,’” explained Dr. Susan Bissett, WV DII President. “There is no time where connection is needed more as West Virginia and the world struggles with a global pandemic and increasing rates of drug overdose (both fatal and non-fatal).”



# ABOUT WV DII

Working every day to reduce drug related overdose deaths in West Virginia.



**“It’s never too early to explain to children that certain substances are dangerous and not to be touched.”**

*–The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, April 2018*

According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse in April 2018:

- 93% annual rate increase in unintentional exposures among children 5 and younger between 2000 and 2009
- Between 2013 and 2015, exposures to the opioids: fentanyl, oxycodone and buprenorphine increased among children 5 and younger
- To date, opioids are the highest proportion of ED visits involving prescription drugs and children
- 9 of 10 unintentional childhood poisonings occur at home
- Poison control centers receive 32 calls a day for children exposed to opioids (60% involved children under 5 years of age)

**Visit us online at [www.wvdii.org](http://www.wvdii.org)**

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