



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Council on Recovery Calls Surgeon General's Report a Critical Turning Point for Drug & Alcohol Addiction in Houston

HOUSTON, Texas (November 17, 2016) – The Council on Recovery hailed today's release of U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy's report on drug and alcohol addiction as a critical turning point in one of Houston's biggest health crises. The landmark report, "Facing Addiction," is the Surgeon General's nationwide call to action for an addiction epidemic that affect tens of thousands of Houstonians every year.

Mel Taylor, President & CEO of The Council on Recovery, welcomed the Surgeon General's report. "Since the 1964's Surgeon General's report on tobacco, these reports have had a major impact on public awareness and action," Taylor said. "This is the first-ever such report on alcohol and drug abuse and we welcome its data so that Houston can finally grasp the impact that addiction is having on our community. Addiction is a deadly and pervasive disease."

According to Murthy's report, substance-abuse disorders affected 20.8 million people in the U.S. in 2015 — as many as those with diabetes and 150 percent of the total with cancer. Yet, Murthy told USA Today, only one in 10 people receives treatment. "We never tolerate a situation where only one in 10 people with cancer or diabetes gets treatment, and yet we do that with substance use disorders," he said.

Mel Taylor agrees. "Addiction help is available, yet too often we see people in severe crisis," Taylor said. "We want families to reach out to us early when they see the need for treatment."

The Surgeon General's report presents the latest information on the health impacts of drug and alcohol abuse. It notes that in 2015, more than 27 million people said they had used illegal drugs or misused prescription drugs. Over 66 million reported binge drinking in the previous month.

"These are all too common occurrences in our community," Taylor said, "and staying ahead of the problem means marshalling as many resources as possible, including good science."

A section of the report presents findings from the neurobiology of addiction, describing the pleasure and pain functions of parts of the brain that combine to make overcoming a drug habit so difficult. Drugs and alcohol also disrupt an area of the brain that controls impulse, reducing a person's ability to avoid these substances.

The Council on Recovery has spearheaded important local research on the effects of alcohol and drugs on the brain, especially in adolescents. That work informs much of The Council's prevention

and treatment work targeting adolescents and young adults. “We’ve done a significant study of our own on this, and concur with the Surgeon General,” Mel Taylor said, “especially his assertion that a person who begins drinking before the age of 15 is four times more likely to become addicted than someone who starts after 21.”

During his interview, Murthy told USA Today, “Solving this problem is not going to take place if we just pass a few laws or if public health experts just start a few more programs. It’s actually going to take all of us coming together to do our part.” He stressed the importance of talking to kids about addiction early.

Taylor agrees and points to the effectiveness of The Council’s related initiatives for families and schools. “We want no more families to suffer,” he said. “Help is already here and anyone needing it can call us now.”

According to USA Today, the Surgeon General’s report suggests that policy makers must put resources into prevention and treatment programs, but that successful treatment of addiction requires more than just a treatment program. Professional counseling and supportive relationships both play key parts.

“I’ve just understood that addiction really touches everyone’s life,” the Surgeon General said. “It’s a disease that doesn’t discriminate, and it’s one that’s taking an extraordinary toll on our communities across the country.”

The Council on Recovery applauds the understanding of addiction and empathy voiced by the nation’s top medical doctor. “Surgeon General Murthy is absolutely on-target with his remarks about addiction,” said Mel Taylor, “and his seminal report will make a huge impact on public awareness of not only the problem, but also the availability of the solutions. The Council on Recovery stands ready to assist the Surgeon General in the bold actions recommended in the report, and to continue our role as the leading non-profit provider of prevention, education, treatment, and recovery in the Greater Houston area.”

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About The Council on Recovery: With 70 years of experience, The Council on Recovery is Houston’s oldest and largest non-profit organization providing the full spectrum of prevention, education, intervention, treatment, and recovery services for individuals of all ages. The Council on Recovery is committed to helping Houston overcome the addiction epidemic through a focus on family healing and long-term support that is equally accessible to all in need. Directly touching over 50,000 lives each year through prevention programs for children and youth, in-school and clinical counseling for teens, outpatient substance abuse treatment for adults, and more, our mission is to provide the highest quality of care at affordable rates for individuals and their families. Affiliated with the United Way of Greater Houston, The Council receives funding from private contributions and grants, special events, and program fees. For more information, visit www.councilonrecovery.org.