

Connecticut Commission on  
Women, Children *and* Seniors



**CWCS**

***News  
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18-20 Trinity St., Hartford, CT 06106 • 860-240-1475 •  
CONTACT: Christine Palm, Public Information Officer at 860/240-8449; or 860/836-2145

**FOR RELEASE Jan. 10, 2018**

## **Opioid Forum Speaks to the Importance of Prevention**

*Event is Thursday, Jan. 25, in LOB Room 1A, Hartford*

HARTFORD – The Commission on Women, Children and Seniors has partnered with the Courage to Speak® Foundation to present a forum at the Capitol on the critical importance of opioid prevention for children and youth.

On Thursday, Jan. 25 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., the Commission, Foundation, key partners, experts, and parents/caregivers will highlight the need for prevention through education and parental and community engagement. They will also identify components of legislation needed to help end this epidemic; such tools include opioid education, social and emotional skills building, prevention tactics, and other concrete ways children can learn to refuse opioids and other drugs despite peer pressure and availability.

Opioid use and fatal overdoses have skyrocketed in Connecticut in recent years. In 2012, there were 357 overdose deaths, compared to 1,078 in 2017, an increase of 18 percent. Experts agree the epidemic will only worsen. The Commission on Women, Children and Seniors, along with the Courage to Speak® Foundation, created a partnership to help save lives by empowering youth to be drug-free and encouraging caregivers to talk to their children about the dangers of drugs.

Ginger Katz, founder of the Courage to Speak® Foundation, lost her teenage son to a drug overdose in 1996, and has given more than 1,000 drug prevention education presentations throughout the country. With a team of experts in the field of drug prevention, Ginger spearheaded the development of the drug prevention programs and curricula for elementary, middle and high school students, as well as parents, in response to the alarming statistics among youth. This is significant because The National Institute of Health found that the drug prevention intervention programs can reduce youth drug use by 20-65% if school programs are in place.

“The Commission and some dedicated legislators have met with communities, families directly affected, and partners, to brainstorm solutions to end this child crisis,” said CWCS Executive Director Steven Hernandez. “Drug use disorder is unique in that every generation of children presents an opportunity to end this scourge before it begins. Together and in partnership, we can make positive strides toward limiting the use of opioids and other drugs in our communities.”

For more information, call Heather Petit, policy analyst for children, at 860-240-0074.