

**Program:**

South Florida Community Coalition (SFCC) for the  
Prevention of Opioids and Substance Abuse in At-Risk Youth

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Nova Southeastern University (NSU) is a dynamic institution that has made a positive, significant, and lasting societal impact since its founding as Nova University of Advanced Technology in 1964. Since its founding, NSU has graduated over 100,000 alumni from a variety of programs in health, law, oceanography, psychology, business, and more. NSU is one of only 50 universities nationwide to be awarded Carnegie's Community Engagement Classification. One of NSU's eight core values is community. The university embodies community by interacting with various external constituencies through diverse services, clinical programs, and community-based resources. NSU is also the largest private, not-for-profit institution in the United States that meets the U.S. Department of Education's criteria as a Hispanic-serving Institution.

The H. Wayne Huizenga College of Business and Entrepreneurship (HCBE) mission is to prepare business and entrepreneurial leaders to embody values-based decision making as they adapt, innovate, influence, and transform organizations to tackle tomorrow's challenges and opportunities. The vision of HCBE is that graduates of HCBE will innovate, influence, and transform organizations that are "best **for** our world"™. HCBE's mission and vision guide the college in decision making, program development, and providing training and support to the community that makes a lasting societal impact. Goal one of HCBE's strategic plan is to create unique programs for business and nonbusiness majors that accomplish the HCBE vision. To maximize its societal impact, HCBE has forged a unique synergistic collaboration with the Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Allopathic Medicine (NSU MD) at the intersection of business and medicine and currently has three of its faculty members holding joint appointments in both colleges.

### **Description of the Innovative Strategy or Program**

In 2020, under the leadership of Dr. Julie Jacko, Chair of the Department of Population Health Sciences in NSU MD and Professor of Decision Sciences in HCBE, NSU received a four-year grant from the Florida Blue Foundation (the Florida arm of Blue Cross Blue Shield) to form the South Florida Community Coalition (SFCC) for the Prevention of Opioids and Substance Abuse in At-Risk Youth. The project is a synergistic collaboration with Drs. François Sainfort, Professor and Chair of the Department of Management and Timothy Page, Professor of Management, who both lead the MBA in Complex Health Systems in HCBE. This project is the largest grant awarded to NSU by the Florida Blue Foundation.

The SFCC's mission is to develop and implement programs to educate, support, and prevent at-risk youth (ages 11-18 years) from trying and using opioids and other substances. The SFCC serves youth in the tri-county area of Broward, Palm Beach, and Miami-Dade counties. The SFCC has developed a novel partnership model currently composed of seven key youth-serving community partners along with NSU: Take Stock in Children-Broward, Take Stock in Children-Miami-Dade, Take Stock in Children-Palm Beach, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Miami-Dade, Urban League of Broward, Pace Center for Girls of Broward, and SunServe of Broward. The SFCC is creating innovative awareness campaigns, carefully curated novel curricular content, support groups, training modules, and multimedia to improve the awareness and behaviors of at-risk youth with a focus on those who identify as racial/ethnic and gender/sexual minorities. Youth-serving professionals, caregivers, and families are also targeted and helped through this program. NSU MD medical students and HCBE graduate students are actively involved in all SFCC activities.

The program will create a new database of risk factors, causes, and prevention strategies for drug abuse that can serve as state-wide and national resources. Another outcome will be a culturally aligned substance abuse prevention program that increases the pool of youth-serving professionals who are trained to identify key indicators of substance abuse and extend messaging to at-risk youth and their families. Finally, the program will improve access to care through referral roadmaps and culturally competent messaging for at-risk LGBTQ youth while promoting lifetime success with opioid and substance abuse avoidance.

### **Societal Impact of the Strategy or Program**

The opioid epidemic is a complex and multidimensional crisis that poses a substantial threat to youth throughout the nation. Nationally, over half a million people died due to opioid-related drug overdoses between 1999 and 2019.<sup>1</sup> This crisis has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, reversing some of the positive national trends in the fight against the opioid epidemic.<sup>2</sup> Nationwide, there were over 170,000 children who suffered from opioid use disorder or accidentally ingested opioids in 2017.<sup>3</sup> The innovative program serves youth, ages 11-18 years, in the South Florida Tri-County region (Broward, Palm Beach and Miami-Dade) accessed through our community partners. As of today, the SFCC serves 3,590 youths and will grow to over 5,000 youths. The program is grounded in a well-developed logic model and is structured around four overall objectives: 1) raise awareness in at-risk youths, their families, and youth-serving professionals; 2) provide the education and training needed about proven

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<sup>1</sup> Understanding the Epidemic. (2021). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Overdose Deaths Accelerating During COVID-19. (2020, December 18). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p1218-overdose-deaths-covid-19.html>

<sup>3</sup> *The Ripple Effect: National and State Estimates of the U.S. Opioid Epidemic's Impact on Children [PDF]*. (2019, November). United Hospital Fund.

tools, techniques, and strategies for resisting drug abuse; 3) develop a community-integrated support framework and educationally-intensive interventions for at-risk LGBTQ youth and their families; and 4) evaluate the SFCC Prevention Intervention Program impact on opioid use and substance abuse in youths ages 11-18 years. Thus, one of the objectives is to precisely quantify and estimate the societal impact of the program on the intended population.

#### **Description of Applicability or Transferability to other Institutions**

The SFCC is creating a real and impactful reduction in opioid use disorder in the youth of South Florida and can serve as a national model for opioid and substance abuse awareness and prevention. The design of every component of the program has been conceived and operationalized to be transferable and applicable to other clusters of academic institutions with their selected community partners. This includes the charter of the coalition itself; the development and administration of awareness campaigns, curated curricular content, training modules, and multimedia; the organization and implementation of support groups, tools, and methodologies; the development of referral roadmaps and culturally competent messaging; and the development and delivery of training programs for youth serving professionals. In addition, the new database of risk factors, causes, and prevention strategies for drug abuse will become a state-wide and national resource and will be maintained and augmented over time.

A specific goal of the Florida Blue Foundation is the dissemination of results state-wide and nationwide. The SFCC will accomplish this goal to mitigate the substantial threat posed by the opioid crisis to youths throughout the nation.