

Empowering Youth and Families Program

The Empowering Youth and Families Program (EYFP) is a 10-week educational series that includes Powerful Families (PF) and Powerful Communities (PC). Each session in the series incorporates protective factors as revealed through research on adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and prepares families to be active leaders in opioid misuse prevention within their communities. This spring, Yancey, Montgomery, and Carteret had a total of nine families participate in their EYFP Cohorts. Following the spring Cohort, 48 caregivers and youth and Extension staff from counties, as well as NC State Extension staff, came together for Family Confluence Weekends of family fun and community action planning. Caregivers and their youth from the counties began planning community events to bring attention to the opioid misuse epidemic in the rural populations of North Carolina. Families will partner with Extension Staff and stakeholders in their communities to conduct their planned community events in the upcoming months.



To date, EYFP Cohort participants have had a measurable impact on the rural communities in which they live. In Fall 2018, Montgomery County's community event educated approximately 200 people on public health issues, including opioid prevention, at a Fall Festival. In Yancey County, Cooperative Extension staff partnered with a local fall festival during which they were able to have contact with nearly 1,500 people and distribute materials about how to find help in their community for opioid misuse, as well as recruit families to participate in EYFP in spring and fall of 2019.



Families have experienced positive impacts from participation in EYFP. Caregivers who participated in the Powerful Communities Curriculum in 2018 and 2019 reported that they were better able to problem solve as a family, were more likely to keep medicines locked up at home, better understood the history of opioid use, and were more confident that they could find local support services for themselves and their children if they needed them. Powerful Families began piloting in September 2019.



County Extension staff, caregivers, and youth coordinate with and involve other local agencies in planning for community education and events for support and coordination of care. For example, in Yancey County, support for their community event includes agencies such as local law enforcement, Mountain Community Health Partnership, the Mitchell-Yancey Substance Abuse Task Force, the local school systems, the Opioid Prevention Ecumenical Network, Mayland Community College, and Yancey County government, as well as a wide variety of other health service providers and community networks. Montgomery County will also partner with local health, government, and private agencies, and their mayor is considering a proclamation to declare an Opioid Misuse Prevention Day for their upcoming event. EYFP is building coalitions of resources that impact all families, both those who participate in EYFP directly, and those whom we reach through community outreach.



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