

Opioid use disorder:

KATE'S JOURNEY

There is no denying the opioid crisis in the United States.
Addiction to these powerful drugs can strike anyone.



Kate, 14

Kate is an only child and a high school student. She has a lot of difficulty with maintaining her mood and may have bipolar illness. Kate's father is employed as an engineer and provides insurance to his family through his employer.



Navigation guide



14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27+ Age

Click to navigate chapters

Exposure

- » Family car accident
- » Misdiagnosis



Addiction

- » Pill theft and addiction onset
- » Overdose



Treatment

- » Treatment search
- » Poor treatment
- » Post-treatment challenges
- » Recurrence
- » Referral to evidence-based treatment
- » Proper treatment



Recovery

- » Sober home
- » Renewed life purpose
- » Ongoing recovery



1

Exposure

Family car accident

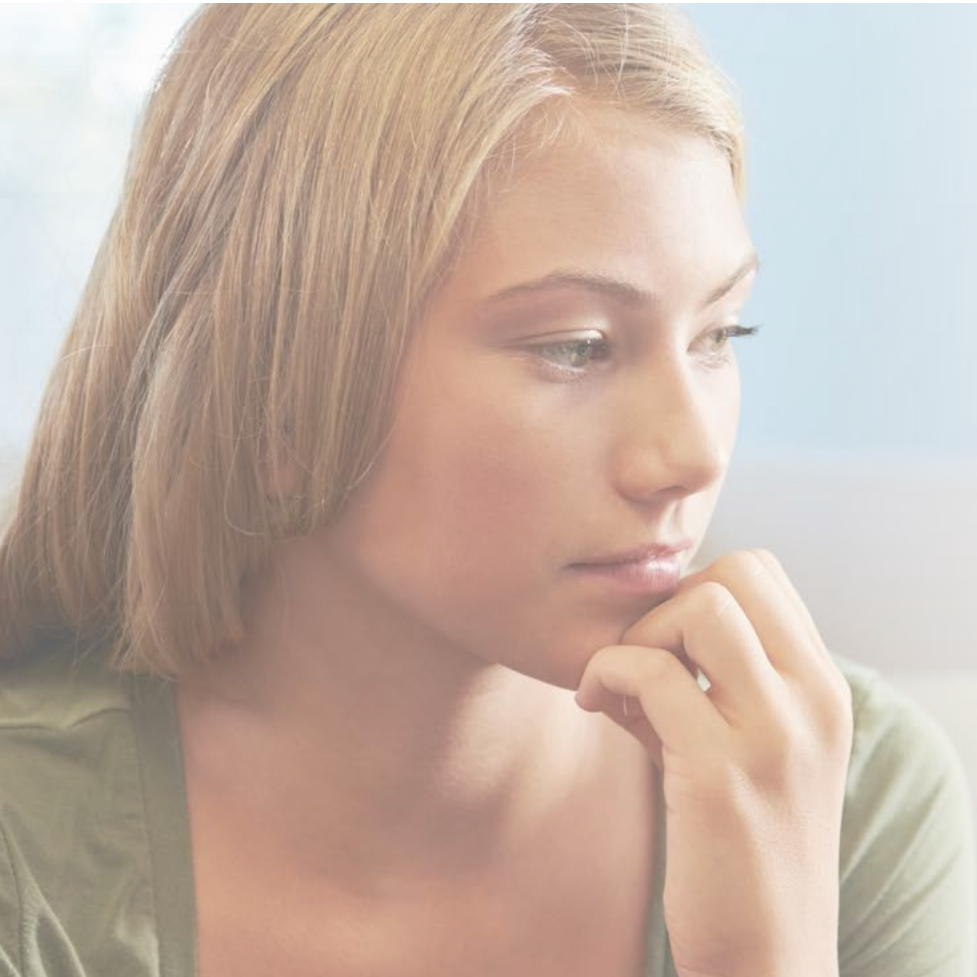
Kate's father is injured and is prescribed an opiate for back pain.



1

Exposure

Misdiagnosis



With the transition into high school, Kate struggles with schoolwork and fitting in socially. Her primary care physician assesses her symptoms as arising from ADHD and depression.

The medication he prescribes inadvertently exacerbates her underlying undiagnosed bipolar illness. This worsens her ability to function socially and academically.



2

Addiction

Pill theft and addiction onset

Kate and her friends get access to some of her dad's opioid prescriptions in the medicine cabinet when they come over to hang out. This starts her on the path of using them, as well as selling them to newfound friends.



2

Addiction

Overdose



One Friday night, Kate's parents receive a call notifying them that she has been brought to the emergency room and is unconscious from an opioid overdose.

3

Treatment

Treatment search



Scared and unsure of where to turn, Kate's parents look desperately for a treatment center on the internet. They find an out-of-state residential center in a resort-like setting that is accepting patients and promises to work with the family's insurance.

The facility promises specialized treatment and free air transportation. Unaware of the other options available, Kate's parents enroll her in the program.



3

Treatment

Poor treatment

Unknown to Kate's parents, the treatment center does not follow evidence-based practices. Kate is inappropriately prescribed medication for ADHD and depression, but continues to experience symptoms related to opioid addiction.

Her parents are shocked when the bills start piling up. They discover the treatment center is not in their network. After four weeks, the center abruptly notifies Kate that her coverage is up and discharges her with no support or aftercare plan.



3

Treatment

Post-treatment challenges



Kate returns home and her parents try to encourage her to attend Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings. With a lack of adequate engagement in treatment, she soon reconnects with her friends who are still using opioids. Due to the lack of proper assessment, her parents are unaware of her underlying bipolar illness and do not make attempts to connect her with a psychiatrist.



3

Treatment

Recurrence

In the midst of mounting conflict with her family, Kate steals her dad's pills and runs away. Her parents receive another call that she has been brought to the emergency room following a second overdose. Due to stress, her mother's health deteriorates, as she is too worried about Kate to take proper care of herself.



3

Treatment

Referral to evidence-based treatment

Following this overdose, Kate's parents check with her primary care provider and insurance plan. Kate is referred to a local, evidence-based, network provider for a comprehensive assessment of her needs.



3

Treatment

Proper treatment

Kate is referred to a local network provider who appropriately treats her bipolar illness and opioid use disorder simultaneously. She receives medication-assisted treatment (MAT), which combines FDA-approved medication with counseling to get Kate on the path to long-term recovery. Kate's parents are actively included in her treatment plan.



4

Recovery

Sober home



Kate is referred by her provider to a reputable sober home where she learns life skills, mends relationships with her family and meets a peer specialist who helps her stay on the path to recovery.



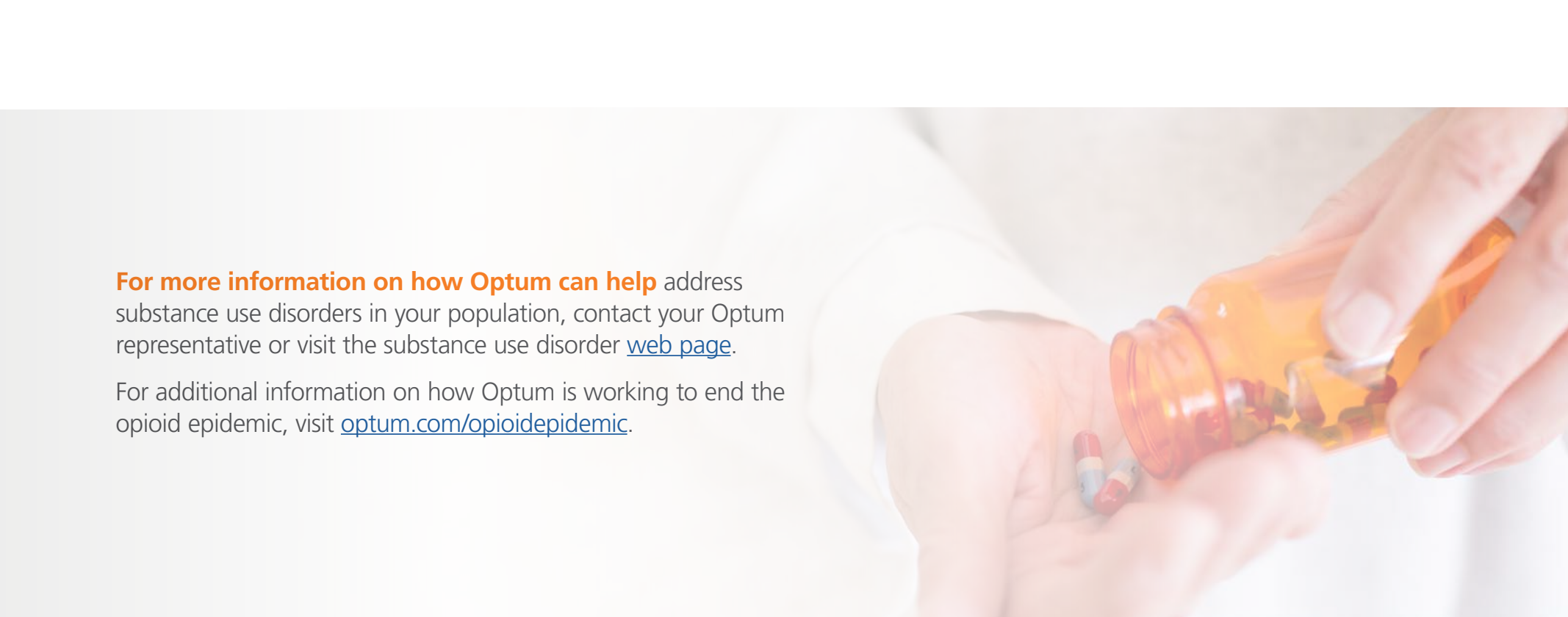
Recovery

4

Renewed life purpose

As Kate continues in her successful recovery, she decides she wants to pursue a career helping others struggling with addiction, just as she has.





For more information on how Optum can help address substance use disorders in your population, contact your Optum representative or visit the substance use disorder [web page](#).

For additional information on how Optum is working to end the opioid epidemic, visit optum.com/opioidepidemic.

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