

JOANNE PETERSON
Founder, Executive Director -- Learn to Cope Inc.

Joanne Peterson is the Founder and Executive Director of Learn to Cope; a non-profit peer-led support organization that was started in 2004 for families dealing with addiction. Joanne is also a parent of a son in long term recovery from opioid addiction which all began with OxyContin. Learn to Cope (LTC) is a unique solutions-based support, advocacy and educational organization for family members of those addicted to opioids and other drugs. Learn to Cope has a website which provides a private support forum with just under 6,000 registered families locally and nationally, as well as 13 current chapters throughout Massachusetts which hold weekly meetings. LTC provides peer support and education with the focus on coping with the danger, stress and emotions related to this situation. LTC provides informational resources regarding the disease of addiction and realistic strategies for treatment and recovery based on the real-world experiences of members. LTC provides training on overdose prevention including recognizing the signs, symptoms, and risk factors of opioid overdose and how to save the lives of family members if they should see these symptoms. When LTC became a program included in the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Narcan Pilot Program, it was the first parent network in the nation to provide the overdose reversal antidote, Narcan (nasal Naloxone) to its members. Of the 104 volunteer parent facilitators, over 40 are certified by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to train members on overdose prevention, narcan administration, and enrollment in the Narcan pilot program. Since LTC became a pilot in Massachusetts in December of 2011, there have been 32 members to date that have saved a life using Narcan. LTC has been successful in getting many young people off the street and into the treatment they need while also helping families to cope with the journey of addiction and find their own recovery.

Learn to Cope has been recognized both locally and nationally through many media outlets including: Time Magazine, the New York Times, Renew magazine, A&E'S Intervention, NPR Radio, Cape Cod Times, Brockton Enterprises Wasted Youth" series, Geraldo at Large, FOX News, Boston Globe, Boston Herald, WCVB TV'S Chronicle and participated in a follow up documentary for the Emmy winning Current TV'S "OxyContin Express" which aired in May 2011. Most recently Joanne and LTC members were interviewed on the Katie Couric show and NBC Nightly News with Kate Snow. Joanne has testified numerous times at the State House in Boston, in Congress in Washington D.C., and at several FDA meetings. Joanne is a member of the expert panel for Brandeis University Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) Center of Excellence, a committee member for the nation FED UP Coalition, and a member of the Board of Directors for the Recovery Research Institute. On behalf of Learn to Cope, Joanne has received numerous awards for advocacy regarding the dangers of Prescription drugs in many communities in Massachusetts.