

DOH Receives CDC Funding to Evaluate Prevention of Opioid Misuse, Abuse and Overdose

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(WASHINGTON, DC) – Today, the District of Columbia (DC) Department of Health (DOH) announced that it has received \$900K, to be dispersed over a three year period, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to prevent overdose deaths related to prescription opioids as part of the Prescription Drug Overdose: Data-Driven Prevention Initiative (DDPI). Specifically, funding will support the District’s efforts to:

- Improve data collection and analysis around opioid misuse, abuse and overdose;
- Develop a strategy to combat the issue; and
- Work with communities to develop larger, more comprehensive opioid overdose prevention programs.

“This grant will help to support our existing efforts to tackle opioid misuse in the District,” said Dr. LaQuandra Nesbitt, Director, DOH. “Specifically, the DDPI will allow us to gather more data on prescription opioid usage and overdoses to then build upon our strategies to address this growing concern.”

The number of opioid-related drug overdose deaths in the District has almost doubled from 65 deaths in 2011 to 114 deaths in 2015. To date, there have been 112 deaths related to opioid abuse in 2016.

Focusing on the growing number of opioid overdoses, in 2015 DOH created the Heroin Overdose Taskforce. Each month, key stakeholders within the DC government convene to share information regarding current public health and law enforcement efforts related to heroin and other opioids. The stakeholders include members from DOH, as well as the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), Office of the Attorney General (OAG), Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS), Fire and EMS Department (FEMS) and the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).

Traditionally, drug misuse and crime have been viewed strictly as legal/law enforcement issues. With this taskforce/surveillance system, the District intends to truly treat opioids as a public health problem and bring a new approach and resources to first understand the problem, which can then guide effective prevention strategies. This new approach aims to provide prevention and law enforcement partners with timely data on the nature and

circumstances of opioid misuse and related deaths to enable effective public health responses.

Additionally, to display the District's commitment to this issue, in October 2016 Mayor Muriel Bowser along with Maryland Governor Larry Hogan and Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe, signed the National Capital Region Compact to Combat Opioid Addiction. The Compact pledged the jurisdictions to work collaboratively to stop the damaging effects of opioid addiction in the region.

The District's participation in the DDPI is a vital part of CDC's ongoing efforts to identify and enhance evidence-based programs across the nation making progress in the fight against the opioid overdose epidemic. DDPI provides resources and support to advance and evaluate state-level interventions for preventing prescription drug misuse, abuse, and overdose. The funding, allocated through the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, builds upon CDC's state programs to prevent opioid overdose, specifically Prescription Drug Overdose: Prevention for States (PFS). Over the next three years, CDC plans to give the states DDPI awards averaging \$430,000 a year to advance and evaluate state-level prevention of opioid misuse, abuse and overdose efforts to quell the growing tide of prescription drug overdose

Additional states awarded funding include: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, New Jersey and South Dakota.