



## HHS UNVEILS INITIATIVE TO REDUCE OPIOID DRUG RELATED OVERDOSE, DEATH, AND DEPENDENCE

On March 26, 2015, U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary, Sylvia M. Burwell, announced a targeted initiative aimed at reducing prescription opioid and heroin related overdose, death and dependence. According to the article, drug overdose deaths have risen steadily over the past two decades and currently outnumber deaths from car accidents in the United States. Prescription drugs, especially opioid analgesics - a class of prescription drugs used to treat both acute and chronic pain such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, codeine, morphine, and methadone, have increasingly been implicated in drug overdose deaths over the last decade.

The President's FY 2016 budget includes critical investments to intensify efforts to reduce opioid misuse and abuse, including \$133 million in new funding to address this critical issue.

Addressing the opioid crisis is a top priority for the department and the Secretary is committed to bipartisan solutions and evidence-informed interventions to turn the tide against opioid drug-related overdose and misuse. The Secretary's efforts focus on three priority areas that tackle the opioid crisis, significantly impacting those struggling with substance use disorders and helping save lives. As part of these priority areas, the Secretary's efforts build on current HHS strategies to address the opioid epidemic and expands many of the most promising initiatives with the greatest potential for impact, including:

- Providing training and educational resources, including updated prescriber guidelines, to assist health professionals in making informed prescribing decisions and address the over-prescribing of opioids.
  - Teaching medical professionals how and when to prescribe opioids by working with lawmakers on bipartisan legislation requiring specific training for safe opioid prescribing and establishing new opioid prescribing guidelines for chronic pain
  - Supporting data sharing for safe prescribing by facilitating prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMP) and health information technology integration and further adoption of electronic prescribing practices
  - Increasing investments in state-level prevention interventions, including PDMPs, to track opioid prescribing and support appropriate pain management
- Increasing use of naloxone, as well as continuing to support the development and distribution of the life-saving drug, to help reduce the number of deaths associated with prescription opioid and heroin overdose.
  - Supporting the development, review, and approval of new naloxone products and delivery options
  - Promoting state use of Substance Abuse Block Grant funds to purchase naloxone
  - Implementing the Prescription Drug Overdose grant program for states to purchase naloxone and train first responders on its use
- Expanding the use of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT), a comprehensive way to address the needs of individuals that combines the use of medication with counseling and behavioral therapies to treat substance use disorders.
  - Launching a grant program in FY 2015 to improve access to MAT services through education, training, and purchase of MAT medications for treatment of prescription opioid and heroin addiction
  - Exploring bipartisan policy changes to increase use of buprenorphine and develop the training to assist prescribing

For more information on the Secretary's efforts and this initiative visit:

[http://aspe.hhs.gov/sp/reports/2015/OpioidInitiative/lb\\_OpioidInitiative.cfm](http://aspe.hhs.gov/sp/reports/2015/OpioidInitiative/lb_OpioidInitiative.cfm)

<http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2015pres/03/20150326a.html>

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