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Addressing the Opioid Epidemic

The great irony of this crisis is that medications originally prescribed to address severe and chronic pain are directly leading to the deaths of thousands of individuals and disrupting the lives of tens of thousands more. In the nation's cities and counties, where ambulances, paramedics, and police officers are assisting drug overdose victims, the costs of addiction are acutely felt and the opportunities to develop solutions are increasing day by day.

National Opioid Overdose Epidemic Statistics


There is plenty of data to acquire a more-than-basic understanding of the epidemic in cities and counties.

Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S., with 47,055 lethal drug overdoses in 2014. Opioid addiction is driving this epidemic, with 18,893 overdose deaths related to prescription pain relievers, and 10,574 overdose deaths related to heroin in 2014 ([CDC 2015 Report](#)).

From 1999 to 2008, overdose death rates, sales, and substance use disorder treatment admissions related to prescription pain relievers increased in parallel. The overdose death rate in 2008 was nearly four times the 1999 rate; sales of prescription pain relievers in 2010 were four times those in 1999; and the substance use disorder treatment admission rate in 2009 was six times the 1999 rate. (CDC 2011)

In 2012, 259 million prescriptions were written for opioids, which is more than enough to give every American adult their own bottle of pills. (CDC 2014)

Click on the infographic below for a fullscreen view.



- ## A Public Health Response Not a War on Drugs

In the face of the unrelenting spiral of overdose and death, government leaders at all levels, health professionals, and law enforcement experts are in agreement that the strategy which waged a "war on drugs" has proven a complete disaster. There is no way to arrest our way out of this epidemic. Put more succinctly by a team of health professionals:

"Preventing opioid addiction requires strategies that foster more cautious and selective prescribing of opioid pain relievers. However, if prescribing is reduced without also ensuring access to addiction treatment, the opioid overdose death rate may remain at a historically high level and the use of heroin may continue to increase. Coordinated efforts from federal agencies, state and local agencies, health care insurers, and health care providers are required to address the needs of millions of Americans now struggling with this chronic, life-threatening disease."

[The Prescription Opioid and Heroin Crisis: A Public Health Approach to an Epidemic of Addiction, Annual Review of Public Health, Vol. 36: 559-574 (Volume publication date March 2015)]

The City-County Task Force Addressing Heroin and Opioid

Abuse

The task force will take the following actions:

- Conduct at least two national dialogues where city and county elected leaders will explore the comprehensive issues related to this crisis, growing trends and proven responses;
- Develop educational opportunities for counties and cities through special forums, educational workshops, webinars and other opportunities; and
- Publish a national summary report of city-county collaboration, focusing on community prevention and overdose response, effective treatment options, public safety enforcement and supply reduction.

NLC Members

1. **Co-Chair-Mayor** Mark Stodola, Little Rock, Ark.
2. Councilmember Leta Mach, Greenbelt, Md.
3. Mayor Nan Whaley, Dayton, Ohio
4. Mayor Steve Williams, Huntington, W.V.
5. Police Chief Nick Willard, Manchester, N.H.
6. Council President Ceasar Mitchell, Atlanta, Ga.
7. City Manager Lee Feldman, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
8. Mayor and Councilmember Walt Allen, Corvina, Calif.
9. Councilmember Joel Navarro, Tempe Ariz.
10. Executive Director Geoff Beckwith, Massachusetts Municipal Association

11. Councilmember Lavonta Williams, Wichita, Kansas
12. Ex-Officio: NLC President Melodee Colbert-Kean, councilmember, Joplin, Mo.

NACo Members

1. **Co-Chair** - Judge/Executive Gary Moore, Boone County, Ky.
2. Commissioner Matt Bell, Weber County, Utah
3. Commissioner Doug Corcoran, Ross County, Ohio
4. County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper, Erie County, Pa.
5. Dr. Vidya Kora, commissioner, LaPorte County, Ind.
6. Commissioner Waymon Mumford, Florence County, S.C.
7. Supervisor Leticia Perez, Kern County, Calif.
8. County Executive Mark Poloncarz, Erie County, N.Y.
9. Commissioner Greg Puckett, Mercer County, W.V.
10. County Executive Steve Schuh, Anne Arundel County, Md.
11. Commissioner Judy Shiprack, Multnomah County, Ore.
12. Ex-Officio: NACo President Sallie Clark, commissioner, El Paso County, Colo.

[Download](#) the bios for the task force.

Comments or Questions?

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