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Gov. Walker: Announces Wisconsin awarded more than $15 million to fight opioid epidemic

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Governor Walker Announces Wisconsin Awarded More Than $15 Million to Fight Opioid Epidemic

$7.6 million federal grant approved for second year

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MADISON – Governor Scott Walker announced this week the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration will allocate $7,636,938, for a second year to support the state's efforts to bring prevention, treatment, and recovery support services to those affected by the opioid epidemic."This funding is critical to ensuring we are aggressive and strategic in our efforts to fight this public health crisis, which is affecting so many people here in Wisconsin, and across the country," Governor Walker said. "The grant money has already allowed us to implement recommendations from the Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse, which is focused on ending this epidemic and saving lives."

In 2016, 827 people died in Wisconsin due to opioid-related overdoses, including heroin and prescription pain killers. Under the direction of Governor Walker, the Department of Health Services hired Paul Krupski to serve as Opioid Initiatives Director, to coordinate state efforts in the fight against opioid abuse.

"This is a complex crisis that requires an aggressive, effective, multi-faceted approach," Krupski said. "The emergence of illicitly manufactured synthetic opioids, including fentanyl, is fueling the escalation of the opioid overdose epidemic, and we recognize the urgency to build on the progress we've made in prevention, crisis intervention, treatment, and recovery."

Under the grant, which was first awarded in April, 2017, Wisconsin is implementing evidence-based practices to fighting the opioid epidemic, including:

• Allocated $2.4 million to 16 counties and three tribal communities to expand access to opioid use disorder treatment including medication-assisted treatment. Services are currently being provided.

• Awarded $1.4 million to Wisconsin Voices for Recovery to work with community organizations across the state to place recovery coaches in hospital emergency rooms to assist individuals who have come to the ER because of an opioid overdose.

• Awarded $60,000 to a community organization for recovery coach training to reach individuals in need of opioid use disorder treatment and assist them in receiving services.

• Coordinated and hosted events for physicians, physician assistants, and advance nurse practitioners to educate them on the benefits of providing medication-assisted treatment.

• Improved data tracking through the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP).

• Creating at least three new regional opioid treatment centers that will provide medication assisted treatment, and expanding services to underserved, high need areas of the state.

• Supporting local coalitions to improve prevention and education. So far, coalition plans include:

- Installation of six new permanent prescription drug drop boxes
- Distribution of 1,145 prescription drug lock boxes and 1,409 prescription drug deactivation units
- Coordination of nine naloxone trainings for first responders and community members
- Hosting of six prescription drug take back events
- Educating the community using the statewide media Dose of Reality campaign materials

Last week, DHS announced plans to raise Medicaid reimbursement rates for behavioral health, including mental health and substance use disorder, to improve access to treatment, as directed by Governor Walker.

Under the HOPE (Heroin, Opiate, Prevention, and Education) Agenda, a bipartisan legislative effort, Governor Walker has signed 28 bill into law aimed at fighting the state's opioid epidemic.

The grant funding is available under the 21st Century Cures Act. The amount of the grant is based on the unmet need for opioid-related treatment and the number of opioid-related deaths in the state. Wisconsin was granted the maximum amount allowable to the state under the eligibility requirements.