

# Lt. Gov. Kleefisch: Kleefisch & Rep. Nygren announce new focus in efforts combatting Wisconsin's opioid epidemic

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Contact: Daniel Suhr ([608-266-3516](tel:608-266-3516)) (Kleefisch), Chris Borgerding ([608-266-2343](tel:608-266-2343)) (Nygren)

MADISON –Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch and Representative John Nygren announced today that the State of Wisconsin will conduct a thorough assessment of the state's substance use disorder treatment system as part of its ongoing commitment to tackling the state's opioid crisis. The new initiative, led by the Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse, will use state-specific data and engage with a wide range of stakeholders to identify treatment gaps and highlight evidence-based policy options for consideration by the state.

“Wisconsin is a national leader in the fight against heroin use and prescription opioid misuse, but we are never content to rest on our laurels. We're asking questions about which policy levers can proactively address this crisis so we can reduce the number of families impacted by this disease,” said Kleefisch. “We look forward to introducing another round of recommendations this winter that will further our state's response to this epidemic.”

“We want to be the laboratory of innovation that keeps setting the pace for the country. Headlines in hometown newspapers across our state remind us every day that more must be done. We are hard at work talking with experts and charting our next steps,” said Nygren.

Opioid-related overdose deaths more than quadrupled in Wisconsin from 194 deaths in 2003 to 827 deaths in 2016. Wisconsin has made significant strides in addressing the opioid epidemic over the past three legislative sessions by passing three separate sets of legislation totaling 28 bills, collectively known as the Heroin, Opioid Prevention and Education (HOPE) agenda. The Governor's Task Force on Opioid Abuse is co-chaired by Kleefisch and Nygren and is charged with developing further recommendations confronting this crisis.

The Pew Charitable Trusts, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research and public policy organization, will partner with Wisconsin to develop recommendations to strengthen the treatment system and provide timely access to comprehensive, evidence-based care for substance use disorders. Pew supports the development of state and federal policies that reduce the inappropriate use of prescription opioids and expand access to effective treatment.

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Daniel R. Suhr, Chief of Staff

Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch

[608.266.3516](tel:608.266.3516) (office)