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MDHHS launches media campaign, builds on initiatives as data show overdose deaths continued upward trend in 2016

LANSING, Mich. – The number of total drug overdose deaths in Michigan increased by 18 percent in 2016 and the majority of overdoses were related to opioids, according to new provisional data announced today by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. As part of the efforts to reverse this trend, MDHHS has launched a media campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of opioid misuse, the treatment options available, and to educate the public about proper storage and disposal of prescription drugs.

“The addiction epidemic continues to take lives and hurt families in every corner of our state and our country,” said Lt. Gov. Brian Calley. “While many initiatives are underway to address this crisis, it’s clear that we have to work harder to reverse this tragic trend. Working together on treatment and prevention efforts will ultimately lead to more second chances and fewer funerals.”

States nationwide have experienced a dramatic increase in the number of opioid-related overdoses in recent years. In Michigan, the number of heroin-related overdose deaths per 100,000 residents increased from 1.1 in 2007 to 7.5 in 2015. Of the 2,335 overdose deaths in 2016, 1,689 were opioid-related, up from 1,275 opioid-related deaths in 2015.

“The initiatives underway for treatment and the public awareness campaign are key to reaching more residents across the state and providing them with the information necessary to find the available prevention, treatment, and emergency services that can save a life,” said Dr. Debra Pinals, MDHHS chief psychiatrist. “The provisional data show that remaining vigilant in our fight against the opioid epidemic is an everyday matter of life or death for many Michigan residents.”

The public awareness campaign is part of Michigan’s extensive efforts to address opioid addiction and overdoses. In May, Michigan issued a standing order to pre-authorize the distribution of naloxone by pharmacists to eligible individuals. Naloxone is a fast-acting, potentially life-saving medication that reverses opioid overdose. Since it was issued, more than 700 (25 percent) of Michigan pharmacies have registered to dispense naloxone under the standing order.

Both the naloxone standing order and public awareness campaign were significant recommendations of Governor Rick Snyder’s Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse Task Force. A Commission was also launched at the end of 2016 to pick up where the Task Force left off and drive the agenda to combat the opioid crisis.

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Additionally, in April Michigan received more than \$16 million in Opioid State Targeted Response (STR) funds from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The Opioid STR grant is being used to promote prevention and increase access to treatment by funding State of Michigan initiatives, including:

- Michigan's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program
- Development of a statewide awareness campaign
- Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)
- Prevention services and strategies
- Improving the availability of Naloxone
- Increasing peer supports, provider supports, tribal supports, and support of law enforcement
- Providing a new model for prison re-entry services for people with Opioid Use Disorder and mental illness
- Collaboration with university partners on re-entry, evaluation, and research opportunities

The MDHHS public awareness campaign includes a variety of media placements, including TV, radio, digital, social media, and direct provider outreach. The TV and radio spots are available on the [MDHHS YouTube channel](#).

To learn more about prescription drugs and opioids, or for resources on opioid addiction, visit www.michigan.gov/stopoverdoses. Pharmacies interested in registering for the naloxone standing order should visit www.michigan.gov/naloxone.

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