



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 8, 2018

**CONTACT:**

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

**MAYOR EMANUEL, CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH INCREASE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT TO FIGHT OPIOIDS**

*City invests an additional \$225,000 in community health workers, continues focus on evidence-based treatment to residents of south and west sides*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) today announced an increased community investment to continue to fight the national opioid epidemic on a local level, in communities most at risk. A new partnership with Chicago Recovery Alliance (CRA) will expand community interventions, place-based behavioral health support and opioid addiction treatment.

“The City of Chicago will continue to lead the fight against opioid addiction, to keep children and families healthy and to hold those who wish to make a profit off of pain accountable,” said Mayor Emanuel. “This is the latest in a series of comprehensive actions to support residents against opioids on all fronts – expanding community interventions, legal filings to protect residents against prescribing abuse and increasing accountability for the pharmaceutical industry.”

Following a competitive bidding process, CDPH awarded \$225,000 to the CRA, in partnership with Men and Women in Prison Ministries (MWIPM) and Heartland Human Care Services (HHCS), to hire and train community members with lived experiences with opioid addiction as peer health workers. Peer workers will work to identify and effectively respond to opioid overdoses, and increasing awareness about opioid overdose prevention. Using an evidence-based outreach model, peer workers will disseminate overdose prevention information, distribute naloxone, an overdose reversal medication, and connect fellow community members with treatment resources.

“By investing in our communities, we will empower residents to share knowledge and resources so they can reduce the negative impact opioids are having on our communities,” said CDPH Commissioner Julie Morita, M.D. “Now community members with lived experiences will educate their neighbors and friends not just on the potential dangers of opioids, but on how to reverse deadly overdoses and get effective treatment.”

This past year, CDPH released a [report](#) showing rates of overdoses involving opioids across Chicago. As a result, CDPH has focused its recent addiction treatment investments to be responsive to the evidence, and the vast majority of recipients of such services in 2017 were black and Hispanic residents from the south and west sides. The CRA community health workers will also be focusing predominately on those areas most heavily impacted by opioid overdose deaths,

“We applaud CDPH for its continued commitment to combat the opioid epidemic. Working directly with impacted communities is a necessary component of addressing the problem,” said Dan Bigg, Chicago Recovery Alliance. “We know that addressing the opioid epidemic in Chicago requires many partners working together. We are proud to be one of those partners.”

Additional communities receiving services will include South Lawndale, East and West Garfield Park, Near West Side, Lower West Side, Chicago Lawn, Englewood, West Englewood, Fuller Park, Douglas Park, Oakland, Washington Park, Greater Grand Crossing, Woodlawn, Chatham, South Chicago, Burnside, West Pullman and Riverdale, IL.

Under Mayor Rahm Emanuel’s leadership, CDPH has launched a comprehensive effort to reduce the negative impacts of opioid use. Today’s news follows a series of strategic initiatives:

- In 2017, CDPH launched [www.overcomeopioids.com](http://www.overcomeopioids.com), an online resource hub providing information about services and providers for residents, their family members and community advocates. The site features free downloadable prevention guides and posters that provide overdose prevention tips and naloxone administration.
- This year, the city launched [www.chicagoconnects.org](http://www.chicagoconnects.org) which helps residents to identify citywide behavioral health resources about substance use, mental health and violence prevention services.
- CDPH’s substance use program has more than doubled its investments since 2015, with all new dollars going to combat the opioid epidemic. The program is now investing \$250,000 annually in CRA to train residents in naloxone and provide them with kits at no cost. Last year, 2,281 overdoses were reversed using this investment.
- In 2017, CDPH began a \$700,000 annual investment in medication-assisted treatment and services, helping more than 1,400 clients last year. This year CDPH is adding \$500,000 for treatment and recovery homes for 500 more residents annually.
- These increases are on top of the \$1.5 million annually that CDPH’s substance use program was already investing in various kinds of addiction treatment, providing support for outpatient and residential treatment settings, medical detoxification services and recovery homes.
- In July 2017, the City of Chicago Department of Business Affairs and Consumer Protection and CDPH announced the new Regulated Business License for Pharmaceutical Representatives to support the City’s efforts to stop deceptive marketing and curb addiction to opioids and other prescription drugs. Any person who markets or promotes pharmaceuticals in Chicago is required to obtain a license, complete mandatory ethics training, receive continuing education and be subject to potential disclosure of their interactions with health care professionals, including gifts.
- Last month, the Chicago Police Department announced it will be providing naloxone, an opioid overdose reversal medication, to officers and training them on how to administer it, expanding tools available to first responders to help save lives. The initial roll-out will be to the districts with a high overdose risk, including the Calumet (5), Gresham (6), Ogden (10) and Harrison (11) police districts as well as the Narcotics Unit.
- Earlier this week, the City of Chicago filed a federal lawsuit against the top three distributors of opioids for their role in the public health crisis caused by the rampant over-prescribing and abuse of pharmaceutical opioids, a class of highly addictive narcotic

painkillers. This lawsuit follows the City's groundbreaking 2014 litigation against opioid manufacturers, which the federal court in December combined into multi-district litigation with suits brought by other jurisdictions around the country.

###