



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL PROPOSES A SERIES OF MEASURES TO COMBAT HEROIN
ADDICTION IN CHICAGO AND COOK COUNTY**

Following recommendations by a joint City and County-led task force, Mayor moves to launch prevention and awareness campaigns, establish additional licensing requirements for pharmaceutical representatives, and increase investment in addiction treatment by 50 percent to keep residents safe from heroin and opioids

Mayor Rahm Emanuel today announced a series of efforts to combat heroin and opioid addiction throughout Chicago informed by a final [report](#) of the Chicago-Cook County Task Force on Heroin, which he convened with Chairman Ed Burke, 14th Ward, and Cook County Commissioner Richard Boykin. These proposed efforts would increase the City's annual investment in addiction treatment by 50 percent—approximately \$700,000—and create improved regulation of pharmaceutical representatives. The treatment investments will first be directed to areas of greatest need to protect residents from the hazards of opioids.

Additionally, these efforts include a \$250,000 investment to increase the availability of naloxone, an overdose reversal medication that saves lives, as well as a privately funded \$350,000 citywide campaign to educate residents and healthcare providers.

“We know that opioid and heroin addiction destroys lives and families, which is why we are making investments to protect the health of our residents and to prevent this epidemic from claiming any more lives,” said Mayor Emanuel. “By investing more resources smartly and by educating residents and providers about the real dangers these drugs pose, we can help those dealing with addiction while preventing residents from becoming addicted.”

The Mayor's new efforts are a down payment on the 36 recommendations made in the final Task Force Report, which was created in response to the growing epidemic of opioid addiction in Chicago and the surrounding region. To stop addiction, the report recommends a series of reforms in six areas: education of the community, education of healthcare professionals, treatment, data, law enforcement, and overdose reversal. On October 27, Mayor Emanuel will convene a regional opioid summit with DuPage County Chairman Dan Cronin where leaders from collar counties will join those in Chicago and Cook County to create an even larger and more coordinated response to the epidemic.

“The City of Chicago and Cook County are joining efforts to face an epidemic that must be attacked at every level of government,” said Chairman Ed Burke, co-chair of the Task Force. “No one entity can fight

this problem alone. We have to do it together, and today's investments represent a way forward in protecting our residents from the harms of this deadly epidemic."

In recent years, marketing from pharmaceutical drug representatives to medical professionals has played a key role in the overprescribing of opioids, helping to fuel a nationwide epidemic of addiction and overdose. To ensure better oversight of these representatives, the City proposes to establish a pharmaceutical representative license above the current Limited Business Licensing required for these individuals in Chicago. Similar to the license in Washington, DC, pharmaceutical representatives will be required to receive additional training and education and provide the City with information on opioid sales and marketing. Through this license, the City would also enable medical professionals to report complaints against pharmaceutical representatives and monitor, audit and adjudicate complaints against pharmaceutical representatives.

"I support the City's efforts to license pharmaceutical sales representatives to curb the abusive overprescribing of opioid painkillers that feeds our country's heroin epidemic," said Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan. "My office has investigated misconduct of pharmaceutical sales representatives and recently filed a lawsuit against the maker of a powerful opioid for directing its sales reps to promote prescriptions for inappropriate uses that can be addictive and deadly."

Due in part to the wide-ranging impact opioid promotion has had on substance use, the Mayor will expand investments to treat heroin and opioid addiction. The approximately \$700,000 in new funding will be focused on opioid treatment deserts where there is a disproportionate level of addiction and the need is greater than the availability of services. By directing more resources, the City will help health clinics and physicians develop or improve programs in the communities of greatest need.

The \$250,000 investment in naloxone is going to the Chicago Recovery Alliance to increase access to the overdose antidote in the communities hit hardest by the epidemic—including on the west side, which has a disproportionate number of heroin arrests and overdoses. In addition, the city will expand naloxone deployment to the entire Chicago Fire Department fleet, which often is the first responder on calls for overdose.

Overdose deaths from heroin and other opioids have skyrocketed in recent years, locally and across the country. Data from the Cook County Medical Examiner's office reveals that in 2015, there were 609 opioid-related overdose deaths in Cook County, 403 of which were in Chicago. The numbers for heroin, specifically, were 424 in Cook County and 285 in Chicago, respectively. Evidence shows that addiction to prescription opioids is often a gateway to heroin addiction and law enforcement officials report the illegal heroin trade is a catalyst for other crime.

"Drug trafficking and overdoses plague west side communities," said Cook County Commissioner Richard Boykin, co-chair of the Task Force. "By working together, we will serve those in need and help rebuild our neighborhoods."

To educate residents and generate awareness on prevention and treatment, the City has secured \$350,000 for education campaigns—funded by a \$300,000 grant from Pfizer and two \$25,000 grants from CVS and Walgreens. These will include outreach both to communities and to the healthcare providers who prescribe opioids. The City will help prescribers understand the dangers of opioid addiction and apply recent guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to prevent overprescribing.

“Opioid addiction is a public health issue impacting cities like ours across the country,” said Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) Commissioner Julie Morita, M.D. “Law enforcement alone cannot solve the problem. That’s why healthcare providers, social service agencies, advocates, and the law enforcement community are working together across the city and county to confront the opioid epidemic.”

Under Mayor Emanuel’s leadership, the City has taken on a number of initiatives to prevent and address opioid addiction in the region and to make Chicago a safer and healthier place for all residents. In 2014, the City of Chicago filed suit against five drug companies—Purdue Pharma, Janssen, Endo, Teva, and Actavis—for deceptively marketing prescription opioids and for misleading regulators, doctors, and patients about the risks of OxyContin. Last week, the City won a major victory by defeating an effort by the drug companies to dismiss the lawsuit in court. Earlier this year, the Mayor struck a breakthrough agreement with Pfizer to commit the company to strict standards in marketing and promoting opioids. The Administration also supported the 2015 passage of House Bill 1 in Illinois to increase residents’ access to substance abuse prevention and treatment programs and to ensure increased access to naloxone.

To further support the administration’s commitment to recovery from substance abuse, CDPH has recently hired its first medical director for behavioral health, Dr. Elizabeth Salisbury-Afshar, who will play a leading role in the department’s work to combat substance use disorders and implement many of the task force recommendations, including those related to treatment, education of the community, education of healthcare professionals, and overdose reversal.

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