

Illinois awarded \$2,000,000 in federal funding to combat prescription drug overdose epidemic

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Senator has led the call for a national response and increased state resources to reduce overdose deaths

CHICAGO – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today announced Illinois will receive \$2,000,000 in federal funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Medication-Assisted Treatment Opioid Addiction Program and Opioid Overdose Prevention Program. The federal grant programs provide states like Illinois with resources and support to expand access to treatment services for persons with opioid use disorder and to reduce opioid overdose-related deaths. Today's announcement coincides with Overdose Awareness Day, a global annual event to raise awareness of overdose and reduce the stigma of a drug-related death.

“As I have traveled throughout our state, it’s impossible to find a community that hasn’t been touched by the opioid abuse epidemic that is sweeping our country. Many of their stories are the same, all of them are heartbreaking, and most, sadly, begin with prescription drugs,” Durbin said. “This funding will provide critical resources to the communities in our state that are on the frontlines of this crisis.”

Since 1999, the number of drug overdose deaths in the United States has nearly quadrupled, and in most states the number now exceeds the number of traffic-related deaths. Drug overdose deaths are now the leading cause of preventable injury death, resulting in nearly 44,000 deaths each year, with most involving either prescription opioids or heroin. In Illinois, there were 1,652 opioid overdose deaths in 2014 – an increase of nearly 30 percent since 2010.

In July, Durbin led a group of six senators in [writing a letter to the Drug Enforcement Administration \(DEA\)](#) calling on the agency to use its power to more aggressively combat the opioid epidemic that is affecting communities across the country. With its existing quota-setting authority, the DEA effectively serves as a gatekeeper for how many opioids can be produced and sold in the United States every year. Durbin led the senators in urging the agency to keep addictive painkillers from flooding the U.S. market by setting lower quotas in the coming years.

In June, Durbin [introduced legislation](#) to combat the volume of addictive painkillers on the market and improve prescribing practices. The Addiction Prevention and Responsible Opioid Practices Act (A-PROP Act) would curb the number of opioids flooding the market, increase accountability to ensure responsible prescribing practices, and support prevention efforts to reduce drug diversion and addiction.

In February, Durbin [introduced the Medicaid Coverage for Addiction Recovery Expansion \(Medicaid CARE\) Act](#), which would expand access to treatment for vulnerable populations who currently are not receiving the addiction care they need. The Medicaid CARE Act would modify the Medicaid Institutions for Mental Disease (IMD) Exclusion policy—a decades-old Medicaid policy that has had the unintended consequence of limiting treatment for our most at-risk populations. The measure would allow more than 2,000 additional Illinois Medicaid recipients in Illinois to receive care annually.

In June of 2015, Durbin [introduced the Overdose Prevention Act](#), which would expand access to naloxone, as well as drug overdose prevention programs that have been proven to save lives. The Overdose Prevention Act aims to decrease the rate of drug overdose

deaths by improving access to naloxone, supporting overdose prevention programs, enhancing surveillance of overdose occurrences, and establishing a coordinated federal plan of action to address the epidemic