

Durbin encourages Illinois medical and dental schools to partner with DEA on opioid prescription training

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CHICAGO – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today urged medical and dental schools across Illinois to work with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to host informal training sessions for students about responsible opioid prescribing and recommendations from the field for confronting the opioid epidemic. In a letter to the schools, Durbin noted that health care providers – as well as those responsible for training the next generation of medical professionals – are the gatekeepers between

treating legitimate pain and over-prescribing dangerous pills, and that more must be done to promote responsible opioid prescribing practices.

“The United States is facing the worst drug overdose epidemic in its history and our nation’s medical providers—both those practicing today and those training for the future—are on the front lines of helping to prevent and respond to this crisis,” wrote Durbin. **“The best way to reduce the number of Americans suffering from an opioid addiction is to ensure that patients never become addicted in the first place. The DEA witnesses first-hand the downstream effects of opioid addiction, misuse, and diversion and, as a result, has a unique perspective on diversion prevention and strategies to address the upstream drivers of this epidemic that may be helpful to your faculty and students.”**

Over the past 25 years, the number of opioid pain relievers dispensed in the United States has skyrocketed—from 76 million prescriptions in 1991 to more than 245 million prescriptions in 2014. The increase in opioid-related overdose deaths has mirrored the dramatic rise in opioid prescribing, with more than 33,000 deaths in 2015. In Illinois, there were 1,835 overdose deaths in 2015, a 16 percent increase in just two years.