Feds Award NC $12 Million Grant To Fight Opioid Abuse

By Administrator
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North Carolina will receive a $12 million grant to continue its fight against the opioid epidemic.The funds will be used for prevention, access to treatment and improved linkages to care.   "The opioid crisis harms families, communities and our economy and we're tackling it head-on to save lives," said Governor Roy Cooper. "This grant will help prevent overdose deaths and expand access to treatment, which provides a path to recovery."

This new award comes in addition to $54 million already received from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). To date, the total funding has provided treatment for 12,000 North Carolinians suffering from opioids. The latest installment of the grant will continue treatment for people already receiving it and expand care to new people. The funding will also help bolster prevention strategies across the state and build mechanisms to connect individuals to care.

An estimated 450,000 North Carolinians – 1 out of every 20 -- are living with an opioid use disorder. Over the past 20 years, more than 12,000 North Carolinians have died from an opioid overdose. In 2018 alone, there were 6,769 emergency visits due to opioid overdoses. Approximately half of people who are hospitalized with an opioid overdose do not have health insurance.

Opioid use disorder is a chronic disease, which requires significant, specialized interventions. Like diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers, opioid use disorder requires long-term treatment, which can be quite costly. Stigma, access to treatment providers, and an inability to pay for treatment keep individuals from obtaining the care they need to live, rejoin the workforce, and support their families and communities.

Expanding Medicaid in North Carolina would help fight the opioid epidemic by enabling more North Carolinians suffering from substance use disorders to get treatment. Medicaid covers a wide range of life-saving treatments for individuals with opioid use disorder, including inpatient and outpatient treatment, rehabilitation and medication assisted treatment (MAT). Those with access to affordable health care through Medicaid are twice as likely as the uninsured to receive treatment.

"One of the most powerful tools for addressing the opioid epidemic is providing access to health care through affordable insurance coverage," said N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy K. Cohen, M.D. "We've seen the impact firsthand in states that have expanded access to health insurance. After Ohio closed its insurance coverage gap,

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75% of uninsured enrollees with opioid use disorder experienced improved access to care. And Dayton, Ohio – ground zero of the opioid epidemic – saw a 54 percent decrease in opioid deaths. We need every tool in our arsenal to fight this epidemic." "

Turning the tide of the opioid crisis is one of Governor Cooper's primary goals. North Carolina's Opioid Action Plan lays out key strategies to achieve this goal, such as reducing the oversupply of prescription opioids and increasing treatment and community awareness. DHHS is currently planning a second Opioid Prevention Summit in June 2019, to engage stakeholders to continue the effort. Learn more and register at http://www.opioidpreventionsummit.org/.

As part of Governor Cooper's focus on eliminating the opioid epidemic, his administration has continually sought out grants for treatments and prevention efforts and issued Executive Order No. 48: Prevention and Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder to pave the way for more federal funding for these efforts.

People who need help with treatment or recovery can get help by contacting their Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO). To find out which LME/MCO serves your county, visit ncdhhs.gov.