

## States Get Nearly \$1 Billion in Grants to Fight Opioid Crisis

By Sara Hansard

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- Grants come as Congress works on major opioid legislation
- Awards made to states, community health centers, academic institutions

More than \$1 billion in new federal grants will help states, community health centers, and other organizations confront the nation's opioid crisis.

Much of that money, almost \$1 billion, is in the form of grants to the states, the Department of Health and Human Services said Sept. 19. The goal of the funding is to expand access to substance abuse treatment, recovery support services, and mental health care.

The HHS action comes as the federal government continues to ramp up its efforts to confront the deadly opioid abuse epidemic, which the department's release claimed more than 130 lives per day in 2017. In addition, Congress is working on a wide-ranging bill (H.R. 6) to fight the crisis, and the House and Senate aim to have a conference version available for final votes in the next two weeks.

In addition, an estimated 11.4 million people over the age of 12 misused opioids last year, according to a 2017 survey from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at HHS.

### Comprehensive Strategy

The HHS said the more than \$1 billion in awards support its comprehensive five-point strategy to deal with the opioid problem which began in 2017. The strategy includes better pain management and better targeting of drugs that reverse overdoses.

Data released recently suggest that efforts are yielding progress, the HHS said.

The 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted by SAMHSA found that the number of Americans initiating heroin use dropped by about half from 2016 to 2017, the HHS said.

The number of Americans misusing opioids also dropped for the second year in a row, and the number receiving specialty treatment for heroin use increased, it said.

The HHS this week also updated its strategic framework for tackling the opioid crisis, using science as the foundation for a comprehensive strategy, Brett Giroir, assistant secretary for health and senior adviser for opioid policy, said in a release.

The more than \$1 billion will enable states, tribes, and communities to advance the strategy and make progress against the crisis, he said.

Most of the grants announced Sept. 19 were made possible by congressional funding secured in March, the HHS said.

### Community Health Centers

SAMSHA awarded more than \$930 million in state opioid response grants to expand access to treatment and recovery support services.

The Health Resources and Services Administration at HHS awarded more than \$396 million to fund community health centers, academic institutions, and rural organizations to expand access to substance use disorder and mental health services. The community health centers provide primary care in underserved areas.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is awarding \$194 million to increase support for states and territories.

—With assistance from Shira Stein

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