

News Release



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Omaha--Nebraska's Coalition to Prevent Opioid Abuse gathered today at the Nebraska Medicine Lauritzen Outpatient Center & Fritch Surgery Center on the University of Nebraska Medical Center campus to release their strategic initiative report and highlight the Coalition's important progress.

One year ago, nearly three hundred leaders in the fields of medicine, public health, social services, governmental policy and law enforcement gathered at UNMC for the "Charting the Road to Recovery: Nebraska's Response to Opioid Abuse" summit. The goal of the summit was to proactively address abuse of prescription and illicit opioids in Nebraska from a collaborative multidisciplinary approach.

Today's reported progress demonstrates the steps taken throughout the year to proactively address opioid addiction and abuse in Nebraska. A range of topics are enumerated in the Coalition's report:

- Nebraska's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program/PDMP Training
- Prescription Drug Take Back
- Pain Management Guidance Document
- Dose of Reality Public Awareness Campaign
- Naloxone Access
- Medication Assisted Treatment
- Implementation of Project ECHO
- Training for Health Profession Students & Providers
- Comprehensive Guide for Safe Handling of Drugs for Law Enforcement
- DEA 360° Program

Governor Pete Ricketts expressed appreciation for the Coalition members, "Nebraska has been a leader in proactively addressing opioid abuse. The work of this Coalition is saving lives and

building defenses against the public health crisis that has engulfed communities in other states across the nation. Thank you to Attorney General Doug Peterson and our Coalition partners for your continued commitment to combating prescription drug abuse.”

Leading representatives from the Coalition expanded on specific details of the report.

“The education in diagnosis and treatment of opioid use disorders is being addressed in a number of ways at UNMC and Nebraska Medicine, including the creation of an educational infrastructure to support the training of Nebraska’s health professionals and health professions students,” said Jeffrey P. Gold, M.D., chancellor of the University of Nebraska Medical Center and chair of the board at Nebraska Medicine.

Chancellor Gold continued, “The UNMC Department of Psychiatry and Nebraska Medicine have launched an outpatient substance use disorder clinic and will develop an Intensive Outpatient Program for patients with combined psychiatric and addiction disorders. We are also well along the development of interprofessional programs to support the sharing of current information relevant to opioid use and related concerns.”

Dr. Gold points out at the beginning of 2017, Nebraska had less than 30 healthcare providers who had completed training to be able to prescribe buprenorphine, one of three medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of Opioid Use Disorder. This fall, 213 providers were trained in Opioid Use Disorder through participation in the training summits.

Law enforcement has also progressed by building collaborative teams, improving naloxone access, and the Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab creating a comprehensive guide for safe handling of illicit drugs for law enforcement agencies throughout Nebraska.

“In Nebraska we have done a remarkable job in the past year in addressing the opioid problem, and we will continue to strive to eliminate this insidious problem. The seizure of 15 kilograms (33 lbs) of fentanyl last week in Omaha by members of the drug interdiction task force demonstrates the enormity of this problem, and the significant commitment by local, state and federal law enforcement ,” Acting U.S. Attorney Robert Stuart said.

Just days ago, DHHS released an important new prescribing resource for providers. DHHS worked with partners including the Nebraska Medical Association, professional boards, and physicians to create the pain management guidance. This guidance document is intended to assist prescribers in making clinical decisions easier as well as providing effective options to treat pain while ensuring safety. The guidance document aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guidelines for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain guidelines and promotes consistent, safe, and effective pain management standards for Nebraska prescribers. The document is available on the DHHS website: www.dhhs.ne.gov/PDMP.

“It’s very encouraging to see the progress made by all the members of the Coalition in the past year. We understand we still have work to do but we have set a course in the right direction and we have already made significant strides,” stated Attorney General Doug Peterson.

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