

Media Inquiries:

Don Bolger
Public Information Officer
☎ (630) 221-7374

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Established in 1945, DuPage County Health Department promotes physical and emotional health; prevents illness injury and disability; protects health from environmental risk factors, and strives to assure the provision of accessible, quality service.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DuPage County Expands Response to Opioid Crisis: *Heroin/Opioid Prevention and Education- ‘HOPE’ Taskforce*

DUPAGE COUNTY—In an ongoing effort to combat what has become the deadliest drug crisis in U.S. history, DuPage County Board Chairman Dan Cronin has created the Heroin/Opioid Prevention and Education (HOPE) Taskforce.

A joint operation of the DuPage County Board and the DuPage County Health Department, the Taskforce includes representatives from several agencies across the County.

The HOPE Taskforce is co-led by Board of Health Vice President Dr. Lanny Wilson and County Board member Grant Eckhoff, and includes 17 community specialists in mental health, law enforcement, the court system, substance abuse treatment and prevention, and education.

“This is a challenging epidemic that requires a wide-ranging response, and the HOPE Taskforce is the next logical step,” Mr. Eckhoff said.

The HOPE Taskforce has developed a framework to:

- Reduce access to drugs
- Reduce opioid use and misuse
- Increase overdose response
- Integrate mental health and substance use disorder treatment and recovery
- Provide education and prevention, and reduce stigma

“Our intent is to bring together the collective wisdom and resources in DuPage County to attack this epidemic from every possible angle,” Dr. Wilson said.

Members of the HOPE Taskforce are meeting monthly to professionally and comprehensively assess opioid use in DuPage County, and recommend effective and actionable policies, initiatives and programs. The Taskforce will issue formal recommendations later this spring.

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The HOPE Taskforce has met with congressional leaders to discuss the framework and share the Taskforce's recommendations to address the crisis, most recently meeting with U.S. Representatives Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Schaumburg) and Peter Roskam (R-Wheaton), to discuss the local response to this epidemic.

Additionally, DuPage County officials have taken steps to fight heroin and opioid overdoses since introducing the DuPage Narcan Program (DNP) in 2014, including:

- Saving more than 460 lives using the antidote Naloxone (also known as Narcan) to reverse the effects of heroin and opioids
- Training more than 4,000 first responders and citizens in the use of naloxone;
- Decreasing access to prescription drugs by increasing access to safe drug disposal through the Rx Box, the county-wide drug disposal program, which has collecting over 46 tons of unused medication;
- Leading community and school discussions and education efforts to create awareness among community leaders, students and parents;
- Promoting opioid overdose prevention resources, including the Illinois Helpline for Opioid and Other Substances (1-833-2FIND HELP), and;
- Providing safe-prescribing education to healthcare professionals.

HOPE Taskforce meetings are open to the public and interested members of the community are invited to attend. All HOPE Taskforce meetings will be announced on the DuPage County Board and DuPage County Health Department websites.

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