



**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
BRUCE RAUNER**

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Gov. Rauner signs executive order creating task force to fight opioid crisis

CHICAGO (Sept. 6, 2017) – Gov. Bruce Rauner today signed Executive Order 17-05, creating the governor’s Opioid Overdose Prevention and Intervention Task Force.

The task force will be co-chaired by Lt. Gov. Evelyn Sanguinetti and Dr. Nirav D. Shah, director of the Illinois Department of Public Health. The task force will look at strategies to prevent expansion of the opioid crisis, treat and promote the recovery of individuals with opioid-use disorder, and reduce the number of opioid overdose deaths.

“The opioid crisis in Illinois affects people from all walks of life — small towns and big cities, the wealthy and the poor, young and old. Without treatment, people suffering from opioid-use disorder risk dropping out of school, losing their job, becoming homeless, losing custody of their children, or getting arrested,” Gov. Rauner said. “This is not a problem that government, health care, police, schools, communities or others can solve on their own. We must all work together. Today, I am creating and charging the Opioid Overdose Prevention and Intervention Task Force to develop a comprehensive strategy to stem the tide of the opioid crisis in Illinois.”

Since 2013, the number of heroin overdose deaths in Illinois has doubled, and the number of opioid overdose deaths has quadrupled. More than 1,900 people in Illinois are expected to die of opioid overdoses this year — more than one-and-a-half times the number of homicides and almost twice the number of fatal motor vehicle crashes. Between 2013 and 2016 in Illinois, total drug overdose deaths increased by almost 50 percent, overdose deaths involving opioids increased 76 percent, and overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids (such as fentanyl) increased 258 percent.

“The opioid epidemic knows no neighborhood, no color, and no class. It is not confined to alleys in urban settings, nor isolated in rural communities,” Lt. Gov. Sanguinetti said.

“Illinois needs a comprehensive opioid strategy that destigmatizes addiction and appropriately aligns resources across state agencies in partnership with community priorities.”

“The opioid crisis in Illinois is not something that we can arrest or even treat our way out of,” IDPH Director Shah said. “Active collaboration and engagement with state agencies, elected officials, the medical community, providers, insurers, educators, law enforcement, patient advocacy organizations, and the public will be critical to our success.”

The Task Force will look at how to increase the number of providers that use the Illinois Prescription Monitoring Program; reduce high-risk opioid prescribing; make information and resources more accessible to the public; strengthen data collection, analysis, and sharing; reduce the number of overdose deaths of individuals recently released from an institutional facility; and increase naloxone availability and training.

“It is time we understand and treat substance-use disorder as a chronic disease and eliminate the stigma that prevents individuals struggling with opioid use from seeking care,” Illinois Department of Human Services Secretary James Dimas said. “This epidemic impacts every community, every neighborhood, and, as a result, every home. With evidence from years of scientific research to support us, Illinois is ready to shatter the image of substance use disorder as a ‘moral failing’ and treat it as any other chronic illness.”

“As a family doctor at Lawndale Christian Health Center on the west side of Chicago, I am privileged and blessed to be on a team that tries to respond to the needs of our community. One of the greatest needs we see right now is preventing deaths from opioid overdose,” Dr. Thomas D. Huggett said. “Medication assisted treatment, behavioral health counseling, and social support are vitally needed as we walk beside our patients who want to leave opioid-use disorder and heroin behind. We have already seen many success stories of those who are now feeling much better, working a job, and are reunited with their families, but there is much work left to do.”

Members of the Task Force will include officials from the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Illinois, Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board, Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, Illinois State Police, and from Illinois Departments of: Financial and Professional Regulation, Human Services, Public Health, Juvenile Justice, Insurance, Corrections, and Healthcare and Family Services.

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