



# Fact Sheet: Combating the Opioid Crisis

April 2019

The opioid crisis is the most daunting and complex public health challenge of our time. However, under the President's leadership, in just two short years, the nation has made real progress—progress that is saving lives every day.

Just over one year ago in New Hampshire, the President emphasized the importance of reducing unnecessary opioid prescriptions, expanding treatment, and boosting naloxone access. Through these initiatives, lives are being saved and we're beginning to win the fight against this crisis.

- The President pledged to “cut nationwide opioid prescriptions by one-third.”
  - From the President's inauguration in January 2017 through February 2019, initial market data suggests that the total amount of opioids being prescribed monthly has dropped by 34 percent. While we need more data to confirm this snapshot, it shows we may have succeeded in meeting this goal already.
  - This success was achieved while the administration also emphasized the importance of appropriate opioid prescribing for patients experiencing severe pain, and supported the use and development of non-opioid treatments.
- The President pledged “to get lifesaving help to those who need it,” and highlighted the life-saving, opioid reversing drug called naloxone.
  - From January 2017 to February 2019, we have led a 484 percent increase in naloxone prescriptions dispensed by pharmacies.
  - The Surgeon General issued a historic advisory urging more Americans to carry naloxone, producing a 27 percent boost in prescribing immediately after the advisory.
- The President promised to expand the availability of treatment for Americans struggling with addiction, and we know that medication-assisted treatment is the standard of care for opioid use disorder.
  - From January 2017 to February 2019, there has been a 23 percent increase in patients receiving buprenorphine and a 42 percent increase in prescriptions for naltrexone.
  - Community health centers funded by HRSA saw a 64 percent increase in patients receiving MAT from 2016 to 2017.
  - We've awarded over \$350 million in grants to support a whole-of-government effort in four different states to reduce overdose deaths by 40 percent in their communities within three years, as part of the NIH HEALing Communities Study.
    - This initiative will help communities in Ohio, Kentucky, New York, and Massachusetts mount a comprehensive response to this crisis.
    - We've heard that the most effective responses to this crisis are when entire communities come together—doctors, nurses, cops, courts, teachers, mayors, employers, parents, coaches, young people, social workers, faith leaders—everybody. That is the kind of response we're investing in with the HEALing Communities study.
  - In 2018, HHS awarded more than \$2 billion in grants to support state, local, and tribal governments, health centers, and other entities in providing prevention, treatment, and recovery services.
  - With Mrs. Trump as our champion for children, we are developing and testing new treatments for newborn victims of opioid use during pregnancy: NIH has been supporting research into neonatal abstinence syndrome and HHS has launched an initiative to better track and understand outcomes and treatments for infants with this challenge.

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- All of these efforts are finally having results:
  - Nationwide, there has been a 3.3% decrease in CDC's provisional overdose death counts from the 12-month period ending one year earlier.
  - As reported in April, the 12-month rolling count of provisional overdose deaths dropped below 70,000 for the first time in a year.
  - In New Hampshire, where the President first announced his opioid initiative, drug overdose deaths are down 9.5% in the last 12 month reporting period. Elsewhere, Pennsylvania was down 18.5% and Ohio was down 21.7%
  - Through mid-2018, nationwide, opioid overdoses treated in emergency departments decreased by 15 percent.
- From 2015 to 2017, the number of Americans with a pain reliever use disorder dropped by 300,000.
- In 2017, the number of first time users of heroin decreased significantly.
- From the health perspective: We're winning this battle, but we haven't won yet.
  - This crisis developed over two decades, and it will not be solved overnight.
  - All Americans should think about ways to help those struggling with addiction — it is not a moral failing, but something we know how to treat.

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1. Measured in MMEs. IQVIA National Prescription Audit, for retail pharmacy and mail pharmacy channels only.
  2. IQVIA National Prescription Audit, retail pharmacy and mail pharmacy channels only.
  3. <https://www.hhs.gov/about/leadership/secretary/2018-annual-report/goal-2/index.html>
  4. Unique patients, IQVIA National Prescription Audit, retail pharmacy channel only.
  5. IQVIA National Prescription Audit, for retail pharmacy and mail pharmacy channels only.
  6. Ibid
  7. <https://www.hhs.gov/about/leadership/secretary/2018-annual-report/goal-2/index.html>
  8. 12-month period ending September 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>
  9. 69,854 for the 12-month period ending September 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm>
  10. Ibid
  11. CDC ESOOS data, 2017 Q2 – 2018 Q2. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/nonfatal.html>
  12. 2015 NSDUH vs. 2017 NSDUH
  13. 2017 NSDUH