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Statewide Opioid Action Plan Offers Blueprint to Control Alaska's Opioid Epidemic

ANCHORAGE – The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services today released the [2018-2022 Statewide Opioid Action Plan](#), offering a collaborative blueprint for DHSS, other state agencies and partner organizations to follow in the continued work to control Alaska's opioid epidemic.

The five-year action plan, compiled by the Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention (OSMAP), was developed with broad input from multiple agencies and community partners. Feedback was gathered from at least 300 diverse Alaskans at stakeholder meetings and community cafés in more than a dozen Alaska communities over the past year. A final community summit in August 2018, coordinated by the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA), the Alaska Mental Health Trust and DHSS, brought together nearly 100 Alaskans from over 80 agencies and community organizations to provide final input for the action plan.

“This plan reflects an Alaska grown, ground-up approach that reaches far beyond the work of the current administration and state government,” said DHSS Commissioner and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jay Butler. “The causes of this epidemic are complex and we must work with everyone – health care providers, local agencies, Tribal entities, law enforcement, community groups, individual citizens and national partners – toward solutions. This plan provides a template for communities and all of us to follow moving forward.”

“This process started at the community level with people who were directly affected by the opioid epidemic,” added Michael Carson, Chair of the Mat-Su Opioid Task Force and Vice President and Recovery Specialist at My House, an organization that serves homeless youth in Wasilla. “The process was unique in that it was such a grassroots effort. That bottom-up approach was vital and incredibly effective.”

Nationwide and in Alaska, the opioid epidemic has become known as this decade's defining public health crisis. During 2010-2017, with 623 identified overdose deaths, the opioid overdose death rate in Alaska increased by 77 percent (from 7.7 per 100,000 persons in 2010 to 13.6 in 2017). Preliminary data for 2018 indicate that the ongoing response may be having an impact: During the first six months of 2018, 29 Alaskans died of opioid overdose, compared with 44 opioid overdose deaths during the first six months of 2017.

In July 2017, OSMAP was formed to lead the state's multi-agency response to the crisis under the direction of Alaska's Chief Medical Officer. OSMAP worked closely with eight state entities including the Alaska State Troopers, Division of Behavioral Health, and the Section of Public Health Nursing plus 13 community coalitions and task forces to coordinate and facilitate the community meetings with over 25 organizations across Alaska.

Six overarching goals are identified in the plan along with specific objectives and actions to reach those goals. The plan's broad public health approaches fall into three areas:

- Stronger environmental controls and improved social determinants which includes reducing the misuse of prescription opioids, limiting access to illicit drugs and promoting mental wellness for all Alaskans;
- Improved screening and management of opioid addiction as a chronic disease combined with better access for all Alaskans to treatment and recovery services; and
- Preventing opioid overdose deaths through widespread availability and the appropriate use of naloxone and improved health provider and drug prescriber education.

[Read the action plan here.](#)

For more information:

[DHSS Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention](#)

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