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Preventing Opioid Harm in Wisconsin Starts with Real Talks

Updated Dose of Reality initiative now online

Governor Evers today joins the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) in announcing the launch of the updated Dose of Reality initiative today. The goal of this information and education campaign is to change the conversation around Wisconsin's opioid epidemic. The Dose of Reality initiative provides the tools for all Wisconsinites to prevent or reduce the risks of opioid use through open and honest talks about the dangers of opioids and ways to save lives.

“We know that many Wisconsinites struggle with opioid use, and that’s a problem that tragically has only gotten worse over the last few years,” said Gov Evers. “Opioids have ravaged families and communities across our state, and this initiative is just one of the ways that my administration is working to tackle this issue head-on to help folks get on the road to recovery.”

The updated Dose of Reality initiative is a series of webpages found at doseofrealitywi.gov that:

- Provide information on the risks of opioids.
- Provide information about safe storage and disposal of medications to keep them out of the hands of people who may misuse them.
- Offer strategies to support people at risk of or experiencing an opioid use disorder.
- Provide information on naloxone, its availability, and how to use it to reverse an opioid overdose.
- Help people find treatment and recovery services for an opioid use disorder.

“We have one goal—to save lives,” said DHS Secretary-designee Karen Timberlake. “Everyone living in Wisconsin can make a difference in turning back the epidemic of opioid misuse and overdose. It starts with real talks. Having open and honest talks with your family and friends can be tough, but it may be the most important thing you do.”

The Dose of Reality initiative launched in 2015 under the direction of the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ), with a focus on preventing prescription painkiller misuse. The new initiative is a result of a collaboration between DHS and DOJ. It focuses on all opioids including prescription painkillers, heroin, and fentanyl – a drug on the rise in Wisconsin. In 2015 the Wisconsin State Crime Lab had 51 fentanyl cases, that number increased to 546 cases in 2020. The new initiative will be updated frequently to reflect emerging trends in Wisconsin's opioid epidemic.

“As the opioid epidemic evolves, we must continue raising awareness about it and working to prevent substance-use disorders,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “In partnering with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services on this updated initiative, we can provide Wisconsinites with improved, up-to-date tools aimed at preventing and reducing opioid use, in all of its forms.”

A key part of the updated Dose of Reality initiative is the promotion of safe storage and disposal of opioids and all medications to keep them out of the wrong hands. Medications should always be stored out of reach of children, and in a safe place—preferably locked—to prevent other people from taking them. Likewise, expired, unwanted, and unused medications should be disposed of at take back locations. The next Drug Take Back Day is April 30, 2022, although any day can be a drug take back day with the many [permanent drop boxes](#) available around the state.

“While opioids are powerful drugs, there is something more powerful than opioids: All of us. Together, we can reduce the dangers of opioids and their impacts on our communities,” said DHS Director of Opioid Initiatives Paul Krupski. “Real talks create supportive communities where prevention, hope, and recovery can be a reality.”

The Dose of Reality initiative is one part of Wisconsin’s response to the opioid epidemic. In the last decade, state and federal funding has been used to create a full continuum of care and services to prevent problem opioid use, reduce the harmful effects of opioid use through safer use practices, expand quality treatment for an opioid use disorder, and provide supports for people in recovery from an opioid use disorder through collaborations with tribal nations, state agencies, county agencies, and community-based service providers. DHS recently concluded a series of online listening sessions to hear ideas from Wisconsinites, partners, and stakeholders across the state on how to use opioid settlement funds. More than 800 Wisconsinites, partners, and stakeholders participated in the Opioid Settlement Fund listening sessions or completed an online survey to share ideas.