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HHS Acting Secretary Declares Public Health Emergency to Address National Opioid Crisis

Acting Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Eric D. Hargan issued the following statement upon declaring a nationwide public health emergency regarding the opioid crisis, as requested by President Donald Trump on Thursday:

“Today’s declaration, coupled with the President’s direction that executive agencies use all appropriate emergency authorities and other relevant authorities, is another powerful action the Trump Administration is taking in response to America’s deadly opioid crisis.

“President Trump has made this national crisis a top priority since he took office in January, and we are proud to be leading in this effort at HHS. His call to action today brings a new level of urgency to the comprehensive strategy HHS unveiled under President Trump, which empowers the real heroes of this fight: the communities on the frontlines of the epidemic.”

Background:

- Each day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 140 Americans die from drug overdoses, 91 specifically due to opioids.
- 52,404 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2015, and preliminary numbers indicate at least 64,000 died in 2016.
- Declaring a nationwide public health emergency will enable HHS to accelerate temporary appointments of specialized personnel to address the emergency (pending any funding needed); work with DEA to expand access for certain groups of patients to telemedicine for treating addiction; and provide new flexibilities within HIV/AIDS programs.
- Under President Trump, in April 2017, HHS unveiled [a new five-point Opioid Strategy](#), with the five following priorities:
 - Improve access to prevention, treatment, and recovery support services
 - Target the availability and distribution of overdose-reversing drugs
 - Strengthen public health data reporting and collection
 - Support cutting-edge research on addiction and pain
 - Advance the practice of pain management
- In Fiscal Year 2017, HHS invested almost \$900 million in opioid-specific funding, including to support state and local governments and civil society groups—to support treatment and recovery services, target availability of overdose-reversing drugs, train first responders, and more.
- HHS has supported the efforts of the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis, and the department looks forward to reviewing the upcoming final report.