

The Opioid Epidemic

A growing Problem...

“I am asking for your help to solve an urgent health crisis facing America: the opioid epidemic. Everywhere I travel, I see communities devastated by opioid overdoses.” United States Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy, MD., MBA

Drug overdose deaths and opioid-involved deaths continue to increase in the United States. The majority of drug overdose deaths (more than six out of ten) involve an opioid. Since 1999, the number of overdose deaths involving opioids (including prescription opioids and heroin) has quadrupled. From 2000 to 2015, more than half a million-people died from drug overdose. Every day, 91 Americans die from opioid overdose.

The Missouri General Assembly’s failure again to enact a statewide prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) during its legislative session that ended in June has cities and counties moving ahead with their own prescription drug monitoring program.

Our own Board of Directors at the Health Department has asked me to pursue a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program for Montgomery County. We have been working on establishing a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program here. The Board of Directors and the County Commissioners will be voting to pass an ordinance in July/August. We are planning for an implementation date of October 1st to be operational.

A prescription drug monitoring program is a database where healthcare providers and pharmacies record prescriptions, allowing the tracking of patients who may be “doctor-shopping” for duplicate prescriptions for addictive opiate-based drugs.

Physicians can see if other physicians in the county are prescribing the same drugs to individual patients, and pharmacies can see if an individual is picking up drugs from multiple sources.

This week in the news, you may have seen Governor Eric Greitans announce a statewide prescription monitoring program. He signed an executive order directing the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services to begin work on creating a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

During the Governor’s news conference, he said, “We need to be honest and clear about the scale of what we are up against: Opioids are a modern plague, opioids kill the young, the old, the healthy, the sick, the virtuous and the sinful. There’s not a corner of our state that hasn’t been visited by this curse. There is no single program, or law, or executive order that can fix this crisis. This program is a step-and it’s a big step. Throughout this week, we will outline the other steps we will take to address the opioid crisis. The only thing we won’t do is wait. We won’t wait for this problem to get worse. That’s not an option.”

Montgomery County will be like other counties around the state that have joined St. Louis County’s Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is managed by Appriss, Inc., and is already being used.

The Montgomery County Health Department takes aim at opioid abuse.