Critical Public Health Law Leadership and Response to the Opioid Epidemic

Drug overdose is now the leading cause of death among Americans under 50, and opioids are responsible for the majority of those deaths. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates there are over 90 deaths each day from opioid overdose.

The Network for Public Health Law (Network) is at the forefront of legal and policy work related to the current opioid epidemic. As a national leader with extensive knowledge of proven and emerging legal interventions to prevent and treat overdose, the Network routinely assists government and health agencies at the local, tribal, state and federal levels, as well as clinicians, policymakers and advocates in integrating this knowledge into laws, policies and actions. As a result, the Network plays a key role in generating and distributing evidence-based knowledge and effective practices that protect and promote public health.

Recent examples of Network activities include:

Government Policy

- Letter from Senator Markey, D. MA, to President Trump on August 3, 2017 calling for a national declaration of public health emergency in which the Senator cites the Network as a primary source.

News Media Coverage


- President Trump plans to declare national emergency in response to opioid crisis — August 10, 2017 USA Today article citing Western Region Director James G. Hodge, Jr., regarding the meaning of a national emergency declaration.


Journal Articles

- Today’s fentanyl crisis: Prohibition’s Iron Law, revisited — International Journal of Drug Policy article co-authored by Corey Davis examining how laws and policies focusing on supply-side
interventions have the unintended consequence of turning people with opioid use disorder to illicit and more harmful drugs like fentanyl.

- **Reframing the Opioid Epidemic as a National Emergency** — Journal of the American Medical Association article co-written by James G. Hodge, Jr., examining the powers and resources granted via emergency declarations and their potential impact on the opioid epidemic.

- **The Law and Policy of Opioids for Pain Management, Addiction Treatment, and Overdose Reversal** — Indiana Health Law Review publication co-authored by Corey Davis discusses promising approaches to opioid addiction, treatment and overdose prevention.

- **Action, Not Rhetoric, Needed to Reverse Opioid Overdose Epidemic** — Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics article co-authored by Corey Davis outlining law and policy options for addressing opioid use and overdose.

### Guidance and Resources

- **Upcoming Webinar: Emergency Declarations to Address the Opioid Crisis – Assessing Impact and Identifying Gaps** — The Network’s legal experts, Corey Davis and James G. Hodge, Jr. will jointly conduct a webcast on September 19 to discuss current government and public health efforts.

- **Legal Interventions to Reduce Opioid Overdose Mortality** — this expansive resource provides analysis of state naloxone access laws as well as Good Samaritan laws and has been used by lawmakers and others to share knowledge and inform practice. This resource was cited in the 2016 Federal National Drug Control Strategy as well as in numerous news media articles.

- **Fact Sheet: Declared States of Emergency - Opioid Crisis** — this resource provides a summary of the emergency declarations in six states and related powers and actions granted.

- **Fact Sheet: Overdose Reporting Requirements** — this resource provides a description of the laws and regulations governing reporting of overdoses in the jurisdictions that require or explicitly permit it.

- **A Call for a National Emergency in Response to the Opioid Epidemic** — this blog post examines how a federal emergency declaration would change the legal and policy landscape for addressing the opioid epidemic.

- **From 0 to 50: The Rapid Adoption of Naloxone Access Laws in the U.S.** — this blog post discusses advances in legal and policy interventions to opioid overdose and examines current gaps.

- **Legal Interventions to Reduce Opioid Overdose Mortality Webinar** — in July the Network convened public health and legal experts and practitioners to examine efforts by states to address the opioid epidemic, and discuss of laws and policies that might better equip them to confront this growing public health crisis.

Network attorneys are available to assist public health officials, policymakers, practitioners and advocates. Visit networkforphl.org.