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ND awarded federal grant to fight opioid abuse

BISMARCK, N.D. – The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration awarded the North Dakota Department of Human Services \$4 million to reduce and prevent opioid abuse and overdose deaths.

The State Opioid Response (SOR) grant will address the opioid crisis by increasing access to medication-assisted treatment, reducing unmet treatment need and reducing opioid overdose related deaths through the provision of prevention, treatment and recovery activities for opioid use disorder. The grant will also support evidence-based prevention, treatment and recovery support services to address stimulant misuse and use disorders, including for cocaine and methamphetamine.

“This grant funding provides opportunities to connect individuals to needed treatment services and also to prevent overdoses by implementing prevention strategies including increasing access to the life-saving medication naloxone,” said the department’s Behavioral Health Division Director Pamela Sagness.

Sagness said the state plans to use the grant to continue to support a comprehensive response to the opioid epidemic while also addressing stimulant misuse and stimulant use disorders.

In 2019, the department provided federal funding from a previous SOR grant to 24 local public health areas across the state to implement evidence-based strategies aimed at preventing opioid overdose and increasing access to effective treatment and recovery services. The effort also increased access to naloxone, which is administered to people who have overdosed on opioids and are at risk of dying and buprenorphine, which is used for medication-assisted treatment.

“After review of epidemiological data that showed critical gaps in service delivery across the continuum of care, we plan to utilize evidence-based implementation strategies that will most rapidly and adequately address these gaps,” Sagness said. “Because of the rural nature of our state, several strategies will be implemented at a statewide level, while others will be implemented at a community-level based on local needs.”

Drug-related deaths claimed 79 lives in North Dakota in 2019. That was an increase from 66 deaths in 2018 and 76 deaths in 2017, according to the North Dakota Department of Health.

Learn more about the work of the Behavioral Health Division at www.behavioralhealth.nd.gov.

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