



## NEWS RELEASE

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# Equipping Police And Communities In Hard-Hit Opioid Overdose Areas

## *Opioid overdose grant targets south-central Illinois*

**SPRINGFIELD** – To fight the opioid epidemic in 18 south-central Illinois rural counties<sup>1</sup> that have been hard hit, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has received a grant entitled, “Empowering and Equipping Law Enforcement and Communities in Rural Illinois to Reduce Opioid Overdose,” from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. IDPH will receive more than \$2 million in federal funding under this grant over the next four years.

“Rural areas typically do not have as many emergency medical service resources, so law enforcement officers are often the first to arrive at the scene of an overdose,” said IDPH Director Nirav D. Shah, M.D., J.D. “To combat the number of overdose deaths, it is vital that we equip law enforcement in rural areas with the training and resources to help prevent thousands of deaths each year.”

The opioid overdose death rate in the 18 poorly-resourced and high-need rural counties has increased more than 50 percent in the past two years, outpacing the 30 percent average increase in all rural Illinois counties over the same period of time. Among the objectives of this grant is to equip every police and sheriff department squad car in the 18 counties with naloxone, a drug that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. The grant will additionally fund training on overdose prevention and naloxone use to law enforcement officer in the targeted area. Efforts will also include establishing robust follow-up, referral, and care coordination for individuals who have overdosed, and increasing public awareness about naloxone and Illinois’ “Good Samaritan laws.” These laws empower friends and family of an overdose victim to administer naloxone and allow individuals to see emergency help for overdoses without risking criminal liability for possession.

IDPH will work with the Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System, Illinois Department of Human Services – Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Heartland Human Services, Bethany Place, and the Illinois Broadcasters Association.

More information about the opioid crisis in Illinois can be found at <http://dph.illinois.gov/naloxone>.

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<sup>1</sup> Christian, Clay, Crawford, Edwards, Effingham, Fayette, Greene, Jasper, Jefferson, Lawrence, Marion, Montgomery, Perry, Randolph, Richland, Wabash, Washington, Wayne counties

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