

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
KEVIN RYAN

Dear Neighbor,

I am reaching out to update you on our efforts to combat the opioid epidemic in Connecticut. Opioid addiction and overdose deaths have taken a steep toll on our state. Communities throughout Connecticut have suffered tragic losses of life. Our legislative efforts continue to prevent overdose deaths and help those struggling with addiction. There is still much we can do, but by increasing education and prevention efforts and available treatment options we can save lives. This mailer contains more information on these laws and resources that can help individuals struggling with addiction and their families. Please share them if you know a family member or friend in need of help.

Sincerely,



For regular legislative updates,
visit my website to sign up for e-blasts.
www.housedems.ct.gov/Ryan

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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
KEVIN RYAN

PROUDLY SERVING BOZRAH, MONTVILLE AND NORWICH

Legislative Office Building, Room 4000
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
1-800-842-8267
860-240-8585
Kevin.Ryan@cga.ct.gov



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THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC



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OPIOID EPIDEMIC

Prescription opioids, such as oxycodone (OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®), codeine, morphine, and many others, can be used to help relieve moderate-to-severe pain. They are often prescribed after surgery or injury, or for certain health conditions. These medications can be an important part of treatment but also come with serious risks such as addiction and overdose, especially with long-term use. In an opioid overdose there is often slowed breathing, which can cause sudden death. There can also be a number of side effects with prescription opioids, even when taken as directed. Drug misuse occurs when someone uses a medicine beyond how it is prescribed, usually to get high, or relieve anxiety or distress.

- On average almost three people in Connecticut die from drug overdoses every day - 1,017 total in 2018 alone.
- More people die in Connecticut from drug overdoses than in car accidents or gun violence.
- These include deaths from heroin, fentanyl, morphine and oxycodone, which includes brand name pills such as OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin and Demerol.

In order to combat these statistics, in 2018 we passed lifesaving legislation to combat the opioid crisis here in Connecticut. We have one of the most comprehensive laws in the nation to prevent and treat opioid abuse, including increasing accessibility to anti-overdose drugs such as Naloxone; providing immunity for people who seek emergency medical assistance and/or administer anti-overdose drugs to someone having an overdose; establishing a statewide prescription drug monitoring program; and limiting the initial amount opioids can be prescribed in the first place. **Connecticut now limits a prescriber to a 7 day or less supply for adults and a 5 day or less supply for minors under 18.** In 2017, we passed legislation requiring certain individual and group health insurance policies to cover medically necessary detoxification.

We have also established a working group to evaluate how to combat the opioid epidemic in Connecticut. They are investigating how many patients annually receive methadone treatment, the rate at which they relapse and the number of people who die from overdoses while participating in these programs. They report their findings and make recommendations to the Public Health Committee.

We continue to fight against this epidemic. Legislation introduced this year to fight opioid addiction deaths includes a bill to establish a medication-assisted treatment program in correctional facilities for inmates with substance use disorder; a bill requiring transportation to a treatment facility which provides medical triage or a hospital after administering Naloxone (the anti-overdose drug); a bill requiring prescribers to inform patients receiving benzodiazepine the side effects of this powerful drug; and a bill which seeks to encourage treatment of chronic pain without opioid drugs.

Fighting this epidemic includes education. We have held over 20 Opioid Forums throughout the state to educate families to understand that this is not a problem for other people. This is happening in all neighborhoods, regardless of socio-economic status. In fact, some fatalities are from wealthy areas whose children were injured playing sports and prescribed just enough opioid pain reliever to create an addiction.

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Room 4000, Hartford, CT 06106-1591
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Kevin.Ryan@cga.ct.gov
www.housedems.ct.gov/Ryan
www.facebook.com/RepRyanCT



- If you are prescribed opioids for pain, help prevent misuse and abuse by never selling or sharing prescription opioids.
- Never use another person's prescription opioids. Keep prescription opioids in a secure place and out of reach of others.

SAFELY DISPOSE OF UNUSED PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS:

Find your community drug take-back program,
your pharmacy mail-back program
or visit www.drugfreect.org for more info.

Visit www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose
Learn about the risks of opioid abuse and overdose

Always talk to your doctor before making a
decision to stop or change your medication.

Avoid alcohol while taking opioids,
and contact the 24/7 Access Line at 1-800-563-4086
if you think you may be struggling with addiction.