

NM to receive \$4M federal grant to combat opioid crisis. Will that be enough?



Flag of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Late Wednesday afternoon, the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) announced that New Mexico would receive \$4,792,551 in federal monies to help address the opioid crisis.

According to its press release ([click here for full statement](#)) announcing the awards to each of the fifty states and various US Territorial governments, HHS is distributing approximately \$485 million “which is the first of two rounds provided for in the 21st Century Cures Act, will be provided through the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis Grants administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).”

The funding was based upon “rates of overdose deaths and unmet need for opioid addiction treatment.”

In a letter to governors yesterday, Health and Human Services Secretary Tom Price, M.D., wrote. *“As I begin my tenure as Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), I do so with a profound commitment to addressing this public health crisis as one of our top three Departmental priorities. Opioids were responsible for over 33,000 deaths in 2015; this alarming statistic is unacceptable to me. We cannot continue to lose our nation’s citizens to addiction. Through a sustained focus on people, patients, and partnerships, I am confident that together we can turn the tide on this public health crisis.”*

New Mexico has the 8th highest overdose death rate in the United States, according to a recent report ([click here for link to report](#)) issued by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), a think tank based in the nation’s capitol.

The grant approved by HHS, still does not address the long term funding needs of states to deal with opioid issues which Obamacare advocates argue would be harmed with the repeal of the national health policy.

The CBPP wrote in its report, *“The ACA’s expansion of Medicaid to low-income adults has allowed millions of people with substance use disorders (SUDs) to get health coverage and access to SUD treatment services, according to a comprehensive report last year from the U.S. Surgeon General.[4] The report also showed how millions of people who buy coverage in the individual and small-group markets, including those getting coverage through the ACA’s marketplaces, have gained coverage for SUD treatment, because the ACA deemed it an essential health benefit.”*

HHS has identified five priorities for the strategic use of the funds they are distributing:

1. strengthening public health surveillance,
2. advancing the practice of pain management,
3. improving access to treatment and recovery services,
4. targeting availability, and
5. distribution of overdose-reversing drugs, and supporting cutting-edge research.

Secretary Price also wrote the governors, *“These grants aim to increase access to treatment, reduce unmet need, and reduce overdose related deaths. I understand the*

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urgency of this funding; however, I also want to ensure the resources and policies are properly aligned with and remain responsive to this evolving epidemic. Therefore, while I am releasing the funding for the first year immediately, my intention for the second year is to develop funding allocations and policies that are the most clinically sound, effective and efficient. To that end, in the coming weeks and months, I will seek your assistance to identify best practices, lessons learned, and key strategies that produce measureable results. Thank you for your collaboration and partnership as we move forward in this critical work together to help the millions of Americans hurt by this public health crisis.”