



Michael J. Murphy
City of Milwaukee Common Council

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A ‘Dose of Reality’: Just what’s needed in the fight against heroin and opioid addiction

Common Council President Michael J. Murphy is joining Mayor Tom Barrett, Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele and officials from the Medical Society of Milwaukee County in expressing full support of Attorney General Brad Schimel’s launch of *Dose of Reality*, a statewide campaign launched today publicizing the real dangers of prescription opioid painkiller misuse and discouraging children and young people from trying opioid medications.

President Murphy, who collaborated with the Zilber Family Foundation, Mayor Tom Barrett and elected officials and community leaders in Milwaukee, Waukesha, Ozaukee, Racine and Washington counties in organizing the first-ever Southeast Wisconsin Regional Heroin/Opiates Symposium in June 2014, said the *Dose of Reality* campaign can help make a difference in battling the long reach of heroin and opiates addiction in Milwaukee and across the state.

“It is clear that the scourge of heroin and opioid addiction is not going to go away soon, and the depth of the problem is felt across all city neighborhoods, all suburban neighborhoods, and in rural areas,” President Murphy said. “It shows that the problems can be found in any neighborhood, and that means the problems affect all of us.”

“We need to make sure we keep prescription painkillers away from those who might abuse them, and in Milwaukee, there are now secure drop boxes at each Milwaukee Police Department district station where people can dispose of opioid medications safely and anonymously,” President Murphy said. “I commend Attorney General Schimel for launching this important initiative, and I will be wholeheartedly supporting it going forward.”

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Mayor Tom Barrett called *Dose of Reality* an “aggressive and valuable public information campaign.”

“Substance abuse and addiction is a national and local issue that must be addressed through a variety of measures,” Mayor Barrett said. “Attorney General Schimel’s statewide campaign is sure to make a substantial impact on the lives of persons already affected by addiction and on those who are at risk for drug abuse. This important campaign could mean the difference between life and death.”

County Executive Abele noted that “communities in every corner of the state are battling a crippling heroin epidemic that is destroying lives and families.” “In Milwaukee County, we’re confronting this important problem head-on by partnering with local coalitions, mental health providers, law enforcement, and community advocates to expand our prevention and treatment strategies,” he said.

“The Attorney General’s aggressive new ‘*Dose of Reality*’ campaign will complement our community efforts by educating the public on the dangers of prescription drug abuse and raising awareness that the devastating effects of drug addiction aren’t limited by geography, race, religion, socioeconomic status, or politics,” County Executive Abele said.

“Milwaukee County is proud to support Attorney General Schimel’s efforts and look forward to a continued collaboration with state and local officials, as well as community partners, to put an end to Wisconsin’s opioid abuse and heroin epidemic,” County Executive Abele said.

More than 150 deaths have been attributed to drug overdose in Milwaukee County in the first half of 2015, and the problem is only expected to get worse, according to **Dr. Brian Peterson**, Chief Medical Examiner for Milwaukee County and President-elect of the Medical Society of Milwaukee County.

“Overdoses will account for some 20% of our autopsies this year, compared to 10% motor vehicle accidents, less than 3% for infant deaths, and around 15% for homicides. Ultimately, prescription drug safety starts in the doctor’s office, and it’s an area where physicians can make a positive impact, one that will save lives,” Dr. Peterson said.

“The Medical Society is proud to support the Attorney General’s campaign,” said **Kathy Schmitz**, Executive Director of the Medical Society of Milwaukee County. “Physicians will play a critical leadership role in helping to educate their patients and the community about this serious issue. It’s a tremendous starting point for conversation – among physicians and between physician and patient about the dangers of prescription drug abuse, risk of addiction and proper storage and disposal of those drugs.”

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With the *Dose of Reality* campaign, the state Department of Justice will be airing TV and radio spots, using social media, and advertising in other venues to educate and inform the public about the misuse and abuse of opioid painkillers, to warn about the dangers of improper storage and disposal of prescription painkillers, and to inform each audience as to the role they play in education and abuse prevention, from medical providers and parents to high school students and young adults

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