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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Harris County Public Health Receives Over \$2 Million for Opioid Prevention from CDC
Health Department Aims to Curb Opioid Overdose in Harris County

HOUSTON — Harris County Public Health (HCPH) has been awarded more than \$2 million from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) to aid in the prevention of opioid overdose in Harris County. According to the [Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences](#), in 2018, almost half of all drug overdose deaths in Harris County involved opioids, and drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the county.

“These funds will allow us to build an infrastructure to prevent the opioid crisis we’ve seen in other communities across the country,” said Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH, executive director for Harris County Public Health. “While it does not appear opioid overdose levels in Harris County have reached those seen elsewhere, we certainly want to do everything we can to keep it that way.”

The health department’s opioid prevention program will focus on improved data collection, enhanced opioid overdose prevention activities and getting people who are addicted to opioids into treatment. HCPH will hire additional staff to collect and analyze data to identify trends in opioid abuse, a substance abuse prevention physician, and a program manager, among others. In addition, HCPH is partnering with multiple stakeholders to implement the new initiative.

HCPH will provide the Harris County Sheriff’s Office jail with an additional supply of medications used to curb cravings of opioids and prevent relapse into drug abuse. The health department will also fund an additional licensed chemical dependency counselor for the county jail. “This partnership with Harris County Public Health will help save lives and can help decrease our recidivism rate,” said Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez.

HCPH will also provide funding for Baylor College of Medicine to train area physicians to prescribe medication treatment for persons addicted to opioids. The University of Texas at Austin Center for Health Communication will receive funding to increase physician awareness and use of the [prescription drug monitoring program](#). The complete list of partners is available on HCPH’s Opioid Overdose Prevention Program [web page](#).

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HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.

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