

IDHS' helpline for opioids and other substances reaches 5,000th call and launches new features

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CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) is launching new features on its Helpline for Opioids and Other Substances. The Helpline provides 24-hour access to individuals experiencing opioid use disorders, their families and anyone affected by the disease.

“We’re excited about launching new features for the Helpline and giving people who struggle with substance use disorder more ways to access resources and treatment options,” Gov. Rauner said. “There were more than 2,000 opioid related deaths in Illinois last year. That’s too many lives lost. We’re working to save lives and get people the support they desperately need.”

In conjunction with the launch of the new Helpline features, IDHS is hosting Opioid Overdose Training at the Illinois State Fair this week. Trainings will be held on Tuesday and Thursday from 10am – 2pm in Lt. Gov. Evelyn Sanguinetti’s tent and will be led by members of the Sangamon County Health Department. Fair attendees will learn how to recognize if someone is overdosing, how to administer the opioid overdose reversal drug naloxone and what to do while waiting for emergency personnel to arrive. IDHS will also be handing out more information about the Helpline to remind the public of how they can help those affected by the disease.

More than 5,000 people have called the Helpline since its launch last December and with three new features being added, Helpline Specialists will be equipped to better serve callers and increase treatment across the state.

- Licensed Clinicians will now offer follow-up services to Helpline callers to help them navigate through potential treatment barriers and offer next steps to support recovery.
- Warm Transfers will allow Helpline staff members to link callers directly to treatment programs whenever possible and make it easier for them to connect with a provider.

- Another new feature will let callers provide feedback about their experience with the Helpline, immediately after their call. Feedback will be reviewed and analyzed each month to assess Helpline performance and identify areas for improvement.

The IDHS also launched [HelplineIL.org](https://www.helplineil.org) in May, giving those affected by opioid and other substance use disorders an online option to access treatment.

“We want people to know that help is here in Illinois. We’ve been working to not only expand access to treatment and recovery services across the state for people of all income levels but also to bring together information about treatment and recovery services so anyone can find it,” said IDHS Secretary James Dimas. “Now, whether you pick up the phone or go online, you have 24/7 access to information about your options.”

Opioid deaths continue to rise across the country, according to the Centers for Disease and Prevention, which reports more than 63,600 opioid overdose deaths in 2016.

Illinois continues to implement measures aimed at combating the opioid crisis and reducing the amount of deaths that result from opioid overdoses. In April, IDHS announced that the state was awarded another \$16 million in federal funding to continue its efforts. Governor Rauner recently launched Better Care Illinois, which includes 4 pilot programs across the state dedicated to expanding opioid use treatment through Medicaid.

“This Helpline not only allows us to strengthen our state-wide access to treatment information for individuals, but it also allows providers to constantly keep their information up to date through the Provider Portal,” IDHS Assistant Secretary of Programs Dr. Maria Bruni said. “We look forward to connecting even more people with the treatment information they need through these additional features.”

Both [HelplineIL.org](https://www.helplineil.org) and the call-in Helpline for Opioids and Other Substances are funded by federal grant dollars that the State of Illinois secured from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The Opioid State Targeted Response grant is administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery. Helpline specialists are trained in evidence-based approaches to help connect callers and web users with treatment and recovery-support services.

If you or someone you know is experiencing opioid use disorder, call the state’s Helpline for Opioids and other Substances at 1-833-2FINDHELP or visit [HelplineIL.org](https://www.helplineil.org).