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Columbus City Attorney Secures Three Federal Grants to Expand Fight Against Opioid Epidemic

U.S. Department of Justice awards City of Columbus \$2.8 million to evaluate and improve lifesaving programs

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that his office secured three highly competitive federal grants that total \$2.8 million in new funding for much needed opioid intervention programs. The funds—which were awarded through the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance—will be used to enhance, expand, and evaluate programs administered by the Columbus Division of Fire, Columbus Public Health (CPH), and various Franklin County agencies.

Columbus has been hit particularly hard by the opioid crisis, as the rate of overdose deaths in Ohio, and especially Franklin County, are some of the [highest in the nation](#). While Columbus already provides many life-saving programs to help addicts and overdose patients, the new federal funds will provide the opportunity to expand and improve these services. Each of the three grants will be used to fund a unique project. The awards also will enable the City Attorney’s office to work with an outside evaluator to benchmark and track the impact of the funded programs on recidivism rates and the outcomes of drug treatment programs.

“Securing these new federal funds will help us expand urgently needed intervention programs and provide critical resources to those who are on the frontlines fighting the opioid epidemic every day,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. “I especially want to thank our staff and our partners in Mayor Ginter’s administration for working diligently with us to win these coveted grants.”

The first of the City Attorney’s grant awards will provide \$799,105 to enhance and evaluate the Rapid Response Emergency Addiction and Crisis Team (RREACT) program, operated by the Columbus Division of Fire and the non-profit substance abuse/mental health provider Southeast, Inc. When first responders are dispatched to the scene of an overdose, they administer naloxone. When individuals are revived, they are offered transport to a clinical facility with staff trained in working with overdose patients. At the clinical facility, overdose patients are paired with a member of the Southeast RREACT support team for connection to treatment, counseling and case management. Unfortunately, the number of non-fatal overdose patients who refuse transport is increasing dramatically and the new federal funding will be

used to hire a RREACT project manager, fund a case manager and provide “wraparound service coordination” and trauma counseling for children and families impacted by overdose.

The second grant will provide \$999,146 to Columbus Public Health (CPH) to help integrate public safety and coroner data with health surveillance information to create a comprehensive, interactive opioid data tool that would be used by epidemiologists and other experts. The funding also will allow CPH to partner with an external researcher to assist in identifying problem areas and potential new intervention strategies.

“The opioid-addiction crisis cannot be conquered by one single entity,” said Mayor Andrew J. Ginther. “Being awarded these federal grants to battle addiction and increase education advances our local efforts to help families.”

The City Attorney’s third grant of \$899,602 will help expand the MAT + Link program, a collaboration between the municipal and county court systems, county sheriff, judges and Southeast, Inc. MAT + Link helps individuals in the court system who are struggling with opioid addiction by providing Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) to them while they are in jail or through court-based services when they are released. The funding will help agencies that work directly with individuals who receive treatment in jail/court to develop follow-up plans and connect them to community-based behavioral health providers for recovery support services and continued drug treatment.

The evaluation component of the federal funds will provide city officials the opportunity to talk with participants to learn more about the true barriers to treatment and what factors are most effective in encouraging individuals to enter and adhere to treatment programs.

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