

Drug Epidemic Action Plan

Congressman Ron Kind

Representing Wisconsin's Third Congressional District

We Must Act Now

Drug overdoses have killed far too many of our friends, family, and children. In 2014, over 14,000 people in the United States died from drug related overdose. In Wisconsin alone, we lost 608 people to overdoses in 2013. There is no silver bullet to combat the drug epidemic. It must be a multipronged approach with communities of health care providers, law enforcement, and families coming together. I propose to address the drug epidemic through common sense legislation and national engagement.

Provide Support to Law Enforcement and Individuals

We have seen that the current model of sending drug addicts to jail without any treatment option has not been working. It is important we break the cycle by increasing access to drug court programs and treatment facilities. Additionally, the life-saving overdose reversal medication, Naloxone, is a proven effective and safe antidote during an overdose. By expanding access to Naloxone, Officers and First Responders will save more lives.

Reviewing & Improving Prescribing Practices

One of the driving factors to continued opioid addiction is access to prescription pills. By examining prescribing practices, prescription amounts, and the effectiveness of Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs), Congress may help to curb the supply of opioids on the black market and reduce opioid addiction. Expanding access to treatment options and those who can prescribe them will benefit those fighting addictions.

Expand Access to Mental Health Care

Citizens in rural areas have the added hurdle of limited access to mental health professionals and treatment. There are simply not enough medical providers to serve the needs of the State of Wisconsin. Through incentivizing practice in rural areas and fixing antiquated Medicare rules, access to mental health services can be greatly improved. Better mental health treatment can stop an addiction before it happens.

Encouraging Alternative Pain Treatments

Opioids are not the only option for treating pain. In addition to prescription drugs, chronic pain sufferers may benefit from alternative treatments, including chiropractic care, physical therapy, anesthesia pain clinics, and nerve stimulators. Congress should encourage alternative treatments as a way to reduce the reliance on highly addictive opioids.

Increase Medicaid Funding through Federal Expansion

Many Wisconsinites continually suffer from mental health disorders, addiction and lack access to treatment. Governor Scott Walker's decision to reject the Medicaid expansion has resulted in a net loss of over \$550 million dollars in coverage to Wisconsin citizens in need of treatment. It is time for Governor Walker to put the mental health of Wisconsinites above his politics and expand Medicaid.