

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. Over 64,000 people in the United States died from drug related overdose in 2016, 42,000 from opioids alone. In Wisconsin, emergency room visits for opioid overdoses more than doubled over the course of a year. We must have a comprehensive approach to addressing this epidemic 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 Communities and Intercept Drugs at the Border

We have seen that the old model of sending substance abuse to jail without any treatment option has not been working. Drug court programs like the one in La Crosse have been successful alternatives to sending addicts to jail. It is important we break the cycle by increasing access to drug court programs and providing our communities and law enforcement with the tools they need to develop comprehensive strategies to combat the drug epidemic. We must also work to prevent the flow of dangerous drugs like fentanyl and heroin into the country.

Expand Access to Treatment

Programs that incorporate medication-assisted treatment have been successful in treating substance abuse disorder and assisting individuals on their path to recovery. Unfortunately opioid treatment programs and medications like methadone and buprenorphine are not always covered by Medicare and other health plans despite their proven effectiveness. We must work to increase access to evidence-based treatments for individuals suffering from substance abuse disorder.

Encourage 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.

Improve Prescribing Practices

One of the driving factors to continued opioid addiction is access to prescription pills. By examining prescribing practices, prescription amounts, and improving Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs), we can help make sure opioids are appropriately prescribed to those who truly need them.

Increase Access to Mental Health Care through Medicaid 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 \$1 billion 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.