

## Drug panel calls for emergency declaration

*Opioid deaths equal 9/11 'every three weeks'*

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump's drug commission has called for him to declare a national emergency to deal with the country's opioid drug epidemic.

The commission sent an initial report to the Republican president on Monday saying the approximately 142 deaths each day from drug overdoses mean the death toll is "equal to September 11th every three weeks."

The report is "meant to give the president some immediate steps that he can take to try to make sure that we stop the death that is happening across the country," said Republican New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who was appointed by Trump to lead the group.

The White House said it will "immediately begin reviewing its recommendations."

Besides declaring a state of emergency, the recommendations include:

Addressing regulations, including enforcing requirements that health plans provide the same level of services for those with physical health issues as those with mental health and substance abuse issues.

Equipping all law enforcement officers with the overdose reversal drug naloxone.

Providing money for federal agencies to develop sensors that can detect the synthetic opioid fentanyl, which has led to an increase in overdose deaths.

Increasing use of medications approved for treating opioid addiction in prisons.

Requiring doctors, physician assistants and nurse practitioners in federally qualified health centers to get waivers to prescribe buprenorphine, a medication for opioid addiction.

Achieving data sharing among state prescription drug monitoring programs by July 1, 2018.

Monday's report came a couple weeks after a group of U.S. Senate Democrats wrote to the acting director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy urging him to "consider important initiatives that could help deliver faster relief to millions of Americans."

The signees urged the Trump administration to do more to combat the opioid epidemic, including implementing recommendations put forward by former Surgeon General Vivek Murthy in a November 2016 report.

The group criticized an administration budget proposal that would cut nearly \$400 million in funding for drug and mental health programs and the Department of Justice's escalating focus on treating drug addiction as a criminal justice issue.

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