

Presidential Documents

Title 3—

The President

Memorandum of October 26, 2017

Combatting the National Drug Demand and Opioid Crisis

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby directed as follows:

Section 1. Policy. It shall be the policy of the United States to use all lawful means to combat the drug demand and opioid crisis currently afflicting our country. Individuals, families, and communities across the United States continue to be devastated by an unprecedented epidemic of drug abuse and overdose, including of prescription opioids, heroin, and illicit synthetic opioids. Last year, we lost at least 64,000 of our fellow Americans to drug overdose, primarily from opioids. This is an increase of approximately 12,000 people over the year before and more than ever recorded in United States history. Drug overdoses now kill more Americans than motor vehicle crashes or gun-related incidents, and more than 300,000 Americans have died of an opioid overdose since 2000. Further, more than 2.1 million of our fellow citizens are addicted to opioids, and in 2014 more than 1,500 people were treated each day in emergency departments for opioid-related emergencies.

This crisis has devastated our communities. It has been particularly harmful for children affected by their parents' drug abuse. The number of infants born drug-dependent increased by nearly 500 percent from 2000 to 2012. The number of children being placed into foster care due, at least in part, to parental drug abuse is increasing, and accounted for almost a third of all child removals in Fiscal Year 2015. Serious drug users are also more likely to be arrested for crimes such as burglary, robbery, and handling stolen goods. Moreover, the drug trafficking that supplies illegal drugs to our country is associated with other illegal activities, including murder and other violent crimes. All of this devastates lives and harms communities in both the United States and foreign countries involved in the illegal drug supply chain. Federal, State, and local governments; law enforcement; first responders; the medical, public health, and substance abuse treatment community; and faith-based and community organizations are working tirelessly and have even expanded their efforts to combat the drug demand and opioid crisis.

Three factors are driving the opioid aspect of this crisis in particular. First, since the 1990s, there has been a dramatic rise in opioid pain medication prescriptions. Second, heroin from Mexico has flooded the country. Third, the illicit manufacture and illegal importation of fentanyl—an extremely deadly synthetic opioid—and its analogues and related compounds have proliferated. Fentanyl is currently manufactured almost exclusively in China, and it is either shipped into the United States or smuggled across the southern border by drug traffickers. Between 2013 and 2016, the amount of fentanyl seized by Customs and Border Protection at the border increased more than 200 times over. Dealers are increasingly lacing fentanyl into other drugs and pressing it into counterfeit opioid pills. Because fentanyl is lethal in even miniscule doses, this is an extremely deadly tactic, as it too often causes users to ingest a fatal amount unknowingly.

Sec. 2. Agency Action. The Secretary of Health and Human Services shall, consistent with section 319 of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. 247d, consider declaring that the drug demand and opioid crisis described

in section 1 of this memorandum constitutes a Public Health Emergency. Additionally, the heads of executive departments and agencies, as appropriate and consistent with law, shall exercise all appropriate emergency authorities, as well as other relevant authorities, to reduce the number of deaths and minimize the devastation the drug demand and opioid crisis inflicts upon American communities.

Sec. 3. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

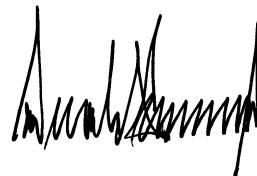
(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

(d) The Secretary of Health and Human Services is hereby authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.



THE WHITE HOUSE,
Washington, October 26, 2017