



NEWS RELEASE

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ST. CHARLES COUNTY COUNCIL TO CONSIDER PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING PROGRAM

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO – St. Charles County soon may have its own Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP), operated in conjunction with St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis, if all goes as County Executive Steve Ehlmann and Councilman Joe Brazil plan. The ordinance, requested by Ehlmann and sponsored by Brazil, will be presented to the County Council at the Sept. 12 session.

Ehlmann explained, "Prescription drug abuse and misuse is dangerous to the health, safety and welfare of our County's residents. The resulting addiction often leads to the use of heroin." Councilman Brazil added, "St. Charles County is very concerned about the heroin epidemic. We are doing anything and everything we can possibly do to try to get a hold on this terrible situation. Having a drug monitoring program is only one part of the solution, but it is a huge step. Since the state is not taking action, we feel we need to move forward."

The proposed St. Charles County PDMP program would be run by the County's Department of Public Health. Those prescribing and dispensing prescription drugs would become registered users of the new system. They would be required to provide information to the Department of Public Health that could prevent "doctor shopping," the practice of visiting multiple physicians to obtain multiple prescriptions for otherwise illegal drugs. The St. Charles County information would be added to an electronic database with information from St. Louis County and the City of St. Louis.

"Utilizing the same vendor as St. Louis city and county will enable us to monitor prescription drug abuse within a larger geographical area, providing increased scrutiny throughout the region," says Ehlmann. "I urge other jurisdictions to work with St. Louis County and their vendor so that, together, we can solve this growing problem, and not just push it out to surrounding Missouri counties."

Results from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration revealed that prescription drug overdose deaths exceed overdose deaths from heroin and cocaine combined. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), PDMPs not only monitor for suspected abuse or diversion of drugs to illegal use, but can give a prescriber or pharmacist critical information about a patient's controlled substance abuse history. All information collected would be confidential and no information about the patient's condition requiring opioids would be collected.

Missouri is the only state to not have a statewide PDMP – a fact that encourages abusers to come here from other states. "Missouri has been known too long as America's drugstore," says St. Charles County Prosecuting Attorney Tim Lohmar. "It's time that St. Charles County joins with others to do its part in addressing the crisis of opioid addiction facing our country."

Ehlmann and Brazil emphasized, "We can't afford to not do this. This problem is tearing families apart and St. Charles County needs to step up to be part of the solution."

Congresswoman Ann Wagner agrees. "I applaud St. Charles County's decision to join St. Louis County's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program," she says. "Simply put, this monitoring program will save lives. Prescription drug and opioid abuse is an epidemic that plagues our state and region, and we must use every resource to combat this growing problem."

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