

Opioid crisis stakeholders share suggestions with Doug Jones at Birmingham roundtable

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Besides more funding, those on the front lines of the opioid addiction crisis said Friday they need help from Montgomery and Washington and better data collection efforts to combat the epidemic.

Stakeholders ranging from prosecutors to EMTs to doctors and nonprofits got together at the United Way of Central Alabama in Birmingham as part of a roundtable discussion organized by U.S. Sen. Doug Jones, D-Ala.

"It's a serious, serious problem in this state. It has become both a health issue as well as a mental health issue for us," the senator said. "We can't just prosecute our way out of a crisis like this. We got to get to the root causes and the issues."

Michael Hogue of the Alabama Pharmacists Association said one of the barriers to better treatment was the state legislature. He said Alabama is the only state in the country that bars pharmacists and doctors from working together on medication management.

"There's not authority for them to operate dependently in this state," he said. "The pushback is largely, I think, perhaps concerns over turf between the health care professions."

Dr. Erik Hess, a clinical investigator and emergency room physician at UAB Hospital, said the hospital is in need of more referral services



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