

Attorney General presents Alabama's plan to fight opioid addiction

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Alabama's Plan to Fight Opioids



HUNTSVILLE Ala. -- Alabama ranks the highest in the country in the number of opioid prescriptions per capita. According to the Centers for Disease Control Alabama has more opioid prescriptions than people.

Attorney General Steve Marshall, meet with healthcare professionals to layout Alabama's plan to deal with opioid overdoses and addiction in the state.

"It's alarming that we're number one in opioid prescriptions," said Marshall. "But I think the more compelling question is, why?" He said he doesn't have a great answer as to why, but he has a plan.

Marshall who is running for re-election this November, says a big step is improving the Alabama Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, to be more user-friendly and help prescribers be better informed on their patients.

"We're now investing 1.2 million dollars to improve that PDMP, and I think physicians are going to really see some dramatic changes," Marshall said.

He said it's not only physicians that are prescribing opioids, but also dentists, and even veterinarians.

"Those who are addicted will use animals for the purpose of gaining prescriptions for themselves, just like we see for example in family members who have loved ones who are under hospice care," said Marshall.

He said in Alabama, overdose deaths have quadrupled in the last ten years, and that number is likely underreported. Most of those deaths are from fentanyl and carfentanil, synthetic opioids which are at least a thousand times stronger than heroin. But, Marshall said curbing prescription opioid addictions could help stop those deaths as well.

"Of those people who are dying over 80 percent of them we initially addicted to a prescription opioid," Marshall said.

Among other things, he says a vital step in fighting opioid addiction and overdoses, is erasing the stigma of mental health and embracing recovery.

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