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State opioid council rolls out report, action plan to combat addiction

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By Morgan Young, Reporter CONNECT

MONTGOMERY, AL (WSFA) - The Alabama Opioid Overdose and Addiction Council released its first report and action plan on Wednesday. The Council was created last August by an executive order of the governor.

The council's objective is to combat opioid addiction in Alabama by creating policies, writing legislation, spreading education and awareness and creating programs to crack down on the issue.

The council is overseen by Commissioner Beshear, as well as her co-chairs, Attorney General Steve Marshall and ADPH State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris.

Officials described opioid abuse as a "crisis" in Alabama, that is tricky to combat since so many cases begin with people using legally prescribed drugs. Beshear said there are more prescriptions for opioids in Alabama than there are people, and that 324 people died from overdosing in 2016. She said that number is probably much larger, but the state can only go by what is able to be reported.

While debate has sparked over the past few months about whether incarceration or medical treatment is the best way to address the issue, Beshear said addiction is a mental illness and should be treated that way.

The council's plan addresses four main areas: prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery and community response.

While the plan itself is extensive, Beshear said there are some highlights. The state is preparing to roll out an electronic program to monitor prescription drug purchases in real time. The council requested the governor's support to allocate \$1.1 million to the Alabama Department of Mental Health to fund the program.

In the mean time, Scott said efforts to educate and change the stigma surrounding opioid addiction will begin immediately.

You can read the [full plan here](#).

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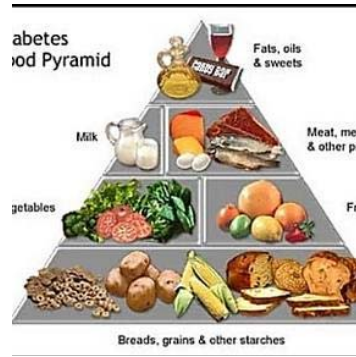
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