

## **Project Opioid Partners with Florida Blue Foundation**

Project Opioid, a Central Florida based initiative, is expanding its business and faith-leader directed collaborative on the opioid overdose crisis into the five largest markets in Florida.

In partnership with Florida Blue and the Florida Blue Foundation, Project Opioid will coordinate with the most established regional business development boards to create collaboratives in Jacksonville, Tampa Bay, West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale and Miami.

The Florida Blue Foundation awarded a grant for Project Opioid to expand the program and bring support to Jacksonville, South Florida and Tampa Bay. With the latest community investment, Florida Blue's financial contribution to Project Opioid and Regional Super Advocates is \$1.7 million.

The mission of Project Opioid is to reduce opioid overdoses and overdose deaths by 50% by 2024.

Regional Super Advocates will look to bring business, faith and philanthropic leaders together to find and implement key solutions to confront the overdose crisis in each of the five key regions.

Goals include mobilizing resources, driving policy changes and reducing the stigma and overdoses in our state.

The designated Regional Super Advocates include:

- JAX Chamber Foundation
- The Miami-Dade Beacon Council Foundation
- The Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance Foundation
- The Business Development Board of Palm Beach Foundation
- The Tampa Bay Partnership Foundation

This expansion comes as new numbers show the opioid crisis having entered its new most deadly phase in 2020. "The COVID Overdose Crisis" has caused a dramatic increase in the number of overdose deaths seen across the country.

In Florida, it is projected that at least 55 people a day died from a drug overdose in 2020, a projected 59% increase in drug overdoses from 2019. Younger generations have been hit particularly hard with 53% of all drug overdoses in the state occurring in individuals between the ages of 25 and 44, even though this segment only represents 25% of the population statewide.

"The opioid crisis is not something one organization can solve on its own – it takes a team of dedicated individuals and organizations committed to the cause," said Dr. Nick Dewan, vice president of Behavioral Health at Florida Blue and chair of Florida Blue's Opioid Task Force. "We all have a responsibility to help those in the communities we serve, and that is why Florida Blue is proud to be part of the initiative and we look forward to our ongoing collaboration with Project Opioid and the Regional Super Advocates."