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In An Effort To Help Addicts, Wisconsin Starts New Addiction Hotline

Wisconsin Addiction Recovery Hotline Began Operating Monday To Help Individuals Abusing Opioids And Other Drugs

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By Shamane Mills

[HTTPS://WWW.WPR.ORG/EFFORT-HELP-ADDICTS-WISCONSIN-STARTS-NEW-ADDICTION-HOTLINE](https://www.wpr.org/effort-help-addicts-wisconsin-starts-new-addiction-hotline)

Seeking to answer a collective cry for help from those who abuse opioids and other substances, the state of Wisconsin has started a new addiction hotline.

The Wisconsin Addiction Recovery Helpline started operating Monday. It's a free, confidential service that is available 24 hours a day statewide.

In 2016, there were 827 deaths in the state from prescription painkillers, heroin and synthetic opioids like fentanyl, according to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

The department plans to publish 2017 opioid deaths soon. More people had fatal overdoses last year and officials say the death toll has climbed to 916.

The hotline, which can be accessed by dialing 211, is also for those who abuse alcohol, methamphetamine and other substances.

"It's going to be a database that can get individuals the resources that they need at a time they need them most. When they are realizing at that point in time 'I need help' and they reach out," explained Paul Krupski, director of Opioid Initiatives with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

The hotline is designed to help individuals and their families find local options for counseling, treatment and other resources.

According to a release, the state has created a list of public and private programs providing crisis services, detoxification services, assessment, counseling, day treatment, inpatient services, medication-assisted treatment, residential treatment, outpatient services, and peer supports.

The database includes information on 1,900 agencies offering 4,700 different services and supports. A website and text service is expected to be available by the end of the year.

Like other states, the American Medical Association says Wisconsin does not have enough treatment available for all those who need it.

But Krupski said the helpline will connect callers with local providers to assess availability and will help them understand what's available under their private insurance or Medicaid.

Officials don't know how many people may use the services.

"I don't have a number in my head but I would expect that many people are going to be accessing this helpline, and we really see it as a missing link that is going to help more people get into treatment and recovery support services they need," Krupski said.

Federal funds are being used to pay for the addiction helpline with a \$400,000 grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The state also has a hotline just for doctors who want to treat addicted patients but don't know how. The University of Wisconsin-Madison and UW Health have a number physicians from anywhere in the state can call to consult with addiction specialists. The idea is to get people who want to stop using drugs or alcohol treatment as soon as possible.

Related Links:

[WisContext: The Opioid Epidemic In Wisconsin](#)

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