



*Commonwealth of Virginia*  
*Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Date: September 27, 2019

**Department of Medical Assistance Services**

Contact: Christina Nuckols

[christina.nuckols@dmass.virginia.gov](mailto:christina.nuckols@dmass.virginia.gov)

## **Virginia Medicaid Agency Awarded \$5 Million Federal Grant to Combat Opioid Crisis**

RICHMOND – The Virginia Medicaid agency has been awarded a \$5 million federal planning grant to increase access to evidence-based treatment for opioid addiction and other substance use disorders.

“This grant will support our work to combat the opioid crisis that is devastating communities across the Commonwealth,” said **Karen Kimsey, Director of the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS)**. “I am particularly pleased that these federal funds will be invested in strategies to improve access to care for pregnant women as well as strengthened supports and treatment for individuals released from incarceration.”

Nearly 1,500 Virginians died of drug overdoses in 2018, a slight decline from the previous year but double the number of fatalities recorded a decade earlier, according to data gathered by the Virginia Department of Health.

“We have worked hard to build a comprehensive network of treatment services across the Commonwealth, but we know that gaps remain,” said Secretary of Health and Human Resources Daniel Carey, M.D. “This grant will help us identify racial, economic and geographic barriers to care and to develop the strategies necessary to eliminate those disparities.”

The planning grant awarded to DMAS will provide targeted resources to address treatment needs for pregnant women and individuals who have recently been released from the criminal justice system.

Other activities funded through the grant include:

- An assessment of treatment needs and community supports, conducted by Virginia Commonwealth University's Department of Health Behavior and Policy, that will include interviews and focus groups with pregnant women and individuals with a history of incarceration who have a substance use disorder (SUD) diagnosis.
- Recruitment, training and assistance to Medicaid providers who treat SUD.
- Strategies to improve access to Hepatitis C and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) prevention and treatment.
- Increased availability of naloxone to reduce overdose deaths.

The grant announcement is part of a national effort to increase the capacity of providers to deliver addiction treatment and recovery services. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services awarded 15 states, including Virginia, a total of \$48.5 million through the Substance Use Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities (SUPPORT) Act, a federal law that went into effect in October 2018.

Five of the states receiving planning grants will be selected for a second phase in the grant program. Those states will received enhanced federal reimbursements over a three-year period to strengthen Medicaid support for addiction treatment and recovery services.

###