



Illinois Society of Addiction Medicine

A Chapter of the American Society of Addiction Medicine

OFFICERS

President David C. Lott, MD, DFASAM
President-Elect Raymond Bertino MD, FACR, FSRU
Immediate Past President Ernest C. Rose, MD
Secretary Andrea G. Barthwell, MD, DFASAM
Treasurer John Peterson, MD

January 4, 2022

The Honorable J.B. Pritzker
Office of the Governor
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Re: Illinois Society of Addiction Medicine's (ISAM) Support for the "Principles for the Use of Funds from the Opioid Litigation"

Dear Governor Pritzker,

On behalf of the Illinois Society of Addiction Medicine (ISAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and clinicians in Illinois who specialize in the prevention and treatment of addiction, we would like to express our support for the implementation of the "Principles for the Use of Funds from the Opioid Litigation" in Illinois.

The need for a stronger, more focused approach to reducing overdose deaths and saving lives is more pressing than ever, as America faces the deadliest drug crisis in its history. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this crisis, heightening the urgency for transformative action. According to recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 96,000 Americans died from overdose between March of 2020 and March of 2021, the highest figure on record for a twelve-month period.ⁱ During this year alone, over 3,500 Illinoisans have lost their lives to drug overdose. These chilling statistics underscore the desperate need for effective and equitable distribution of opioid settlement funds to combat the devastating effects of the overdose epidemic.

In the coming months, states, cities, and counties will begin receiving funds from opioid manufacturers, pharmaceutical distributors and pharmacies as a result of litigation brought against these companies for their role in the opioid epidemic that has claimed more than half a million lives over the past two decades.ⁱⁱ The infusion of settlement funds into state budgets presents a golden opportunity to not only abate the past harms of opioids, but also invest in the future health and vitality of communities most adversely impacted by addiction. As such, Governors, Attorneys General, and Legislators will face difficult decisions in determining the best use of the funds. To help guide state officials during this process, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health developed a robust list of Principles for the Use of Funds From the Opioid Litigation, featuring five guiding principles for the utilization of settlement funds. **ISAM strongly encourages the adoption of all five of these principles in Illinois:**

1. Spend money to save lives.
2. Use evidence to guide spending.

3. Invest in youth prevention.
4. Focus on racial equity.
5. Develop a fair and transparent process for deciding where to spend the funding.

We believe that Principle One, Spend Money to Save Lives, demands closer examination. Given the economic impact of the pandemic, many states and localities may be tempted to use the dollars to fill holes in their budgets rather than expand needed programs. Jurisdictions should use the funds to supplement rather than replace existing spending and report to the public how and where the money is being spent. To ensure this happens, it is critical to establish a statewide dedicated fund that would protect the settlement funds from the various lawsuits. There are two bills under consideration that establish a dedicated fund for the opioid settlement in Illinois. **We strongly encourage you to support successor bills of 2021 HB 3249/SB 2322 or other similar bills as they advance through the legislature.**

Additionally, we urge you to pay specific attention to Principle Two, Use Evidence to Guide Spending. At this point in the overdose epidemic, researchers and clinicians have built a substantial body of evidence demonstrating what works and what does not. States and localities should use this information to guide funding decisions. To ensure this happens, funds should be directed toward evidence-based programs, removing policies that block adoption of programs that work, building capacity for strong programs, and supporting robust data collection.

Throughout this process, we urge you to ensure a focus on racial equity. Although minority communities experience substance use disorders at similar rates as other racial groups, in recent years the rate of opioid overdose deaths has been increasing more rapidly in Black populations than in white ones. In Illinois, Black residents are shown to have higher rates of overdose deaths than the national average.ⁱⁱⁱ Additionally, historically racist policies and practices have widened the differential impact of the epidemic. Without a focus on racial equity when allocating settlement funds, localities run the risk of continuing a cycle of inequity.

Opioid use and substance use disorders contribute to the deaths of tens of thousands of Americans each year, many of which are preventable. To reduce this burden, further action must be taken to prevent and treat these disorders. As such, we wanted to affirm our support for the Principles for the Use of Funds from the Opioid Litigation and emphasize the importance of ensuring the funds received from opioid-related litigation are used to address these underlying issues.

ISAM greatly appreciates both you and your staff's tireless efforts in fighting against the overdose epidemic in Illinois. By implementing the Principles for the Use of Funds from the Opioid Litigation, we believe that these efforts will be strengthened, and communities statewide will benefit. For your awareness, a similar version of this letter has been sent to the office of Attorney General Raoul. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at davidclott@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



David C. Lott, MD, DFASAM
President, Illinois Society of Addiction Medicine

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- ⁱ CDC. (2021, October 13). *Products - vital statistics rapid release - provisional drug overdose data*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved October 18, 2021, from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/drug-overdose-data.htm#selection_specific_states_jurisdictions.
- ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2021, February 12). *Opioid crisis statistics*. HHS.gov. Retrieved October 18, 2021, from <https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/about-the-epidemic/opioid-crisis-statistics/index.html>.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Drake, J., Charles, C., Bourgeois, J. W., Daniel, E. S., & Kwende, M. (2020). Exploring the impact of the opioid epidemic in black and Hispanic communities in the United States. *Drug Science, Policy and Law*, 6, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050324520940428>

Cc:

Representative Deb Conroy
Chair, Mental Health and Addiction Committee

Representative Jonathan Carroll

Representative Greg Harris
Majority Leader – Illinois House

Representative Jim Durkin
Minority Leader – Illinois House

Ngozi Ezike, MD
Director, IDPH

David Jones
Director of IPDH Division
Substance Use Prevention & Recovery

Senator Sara Feigenholt

Senator Melinda Bush

Senator Laura Ellman

Senator Don Harmon
President of the Senate

Senator Kimberly A. Lightford (D)
Senate Majority Leader

Kwame Raoul
Attorney General of Illinois

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January 4, 2022

The Honorable Kwame Raoul
Office of the Attorney General
500 South Second Street
Springfield, IL 62701

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