Deadly Impact

70,237 drug overdose deaths occurred in the United States in 2017. West Virginia leads the nation in overdose deaths — a rate of 57.8 per 100,000 (2 1/2 times the national average).

Over 6,000 children are currently in foster care, a crisis that is being driven by the drug epidemic.

These sobering statistics should be a wake up call that we are losing too many West Virginians, too early and too often.

Heroin, Fentanyl and other dangerous drugs are readily available in communities across the state. Victims of drug addiction and overdose deaths are getting younger, and they come from homes across all socioeconomic backgrounds. The increasing incidence of drug abuse fuels violent and property crime in our communities, stresses our social services network, burdens our healthcare system, and impacts our schools. Most of all, this scourge is devastating West Virginia families and robbing us of the promise and potential of those who are enslaved by addiction.
The mission of the U.S. Attorney’s Heroin(e) Education Action Team (USA HEAT) is to reduce the growing harm to West Virginia families and communities caused by drug abuse, by increasing our understanding of the drug epidemic in our state.

USA HEAT is a partnership between the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of West Virginia and families who have lost loved ones to overdose. These courageous moms, dads and other family members share their stories with the hope of preventing others from suffering the overwhelming grief of losing a loved one to a drug overdose.

**Prosecuting Dealers**

Substance use disorder plagues every county in our state. The US Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of West Virginia is committed to doing everything within our power to turn the tide on the drug epidemic.

Fentanyl is the deadliest drug in the country. In 2018, the District seized enough fentanyl to kill more than 1.6 million West Virginians.

Fentanyl is being mixed with numerous illicit drugs, not just heroin. We are doing everything within our power to reduce overdose deaths — including prosecuting every readily provable fentanyl case.

We will continue to shut down multi-state drug trafficking networks that bring significant amounts of heroin, meth and other illegal drugs into our communities. We will continue to lock up any dealer peddling their poisons in West Virginia — whether it be on a street corner or in a physician’s office.

**Fighting Back**

USA HEAT seeks to inform our communities of what we are up against, and what we can do to fight back and reclaim our families and communities. Our team members deliver a compelling message, based on their personal tragedy. USA HEAT seeks to mobilize our communities to implement a coordinated, effective response to this growing threat. U.S. Attorney Mike Stuart and his staff partner with members of the team to deliver a truly powerful message to students and community groups about the growing drug epidemic and its real impact on our families.

The hour long presentation begins with an overview of street drugs and their prevalence in the state. A HEAT team member will share their compelling story of a loved one loss to addiction, including their poor choices, red flags and missed opportunities.

Messages of abstinence and hope from incarcerated inmates and recovering addicts are shared with the audience, as well as resources for treatment and healing.

If your school, organization or community is interested in combatting the drug crisis in our state and preventing our youth from falling victim to drug addiction, contact the U.S. Attorney’s Office to schedule a presentation.

Call 800-659-8726 or 304-345-2200