

Walker's Opioid Prevention Plan Does Not Match Magnitude of Crisis

Written by Citizen Action of Wisconsin, Robert Kraig
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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/opioid-young-start-s5.jpg>



Research shows 9 in 10 adult addicts started using risky addictive substances before age 18. Plan needs a proactive approach to prevention that is up to the scale of the problem.

STATEWIDE - Thursday while announcing a special session on opioid addiction, Governor Walker proposed a program that Citizen Action and the Healthy Youth Bright Futures Coalition has been advocating for three years which would help prevent substance use addiction for Wisconsin high school students. On Walker's list of proposals is a \$100,000 for a prevention program called Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT).

While Citizen Action strongly believes that prevention is the best approach to the opioid crisis, the scale being proposed by Governor Walker is wholly inadequate. In the face of the public health epidemic that is the opioid crisis, small ball policies will not provide the cure. Governor Walker continues the misfocus of resources on criminal justice rather than prevention and public health. His new set of opioid proposals actually put more than 4 times as much into criminal investigation than prevention.

A [Legislative Fiscal Bureau memo](#) requested by State Senator LaTonya Johnson finds that we would need a state investment of 18 times the amount proposed by Walker, \$1.8 million in the first year, to adequately protect all students in all public schools (rural, urban or suburban) through a substance use prevention effort. A full program would cost \$830,000 per year thereafter to maintain.

Governor Walker's proposal leaves too many of Wisconsin's young people at greater risk of addiction. As Citizen Action argued [9 months ago in a column in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#) : "If there was an epidemic of flu or malaria, or any other life-threatening disease, our public health system would take dramatic action to prevent it from spreading... What's missing from the initial response of state government to the spread of heroin and opioid addiction is a proactive approach to prevention that is up to the scale of the problem... Large-scale prevention must start with Wisconsin's teenagers and young adults. It's well-established that substance use disorders begin during adolescent years. Research shows

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that nine in 10 Americans who meet the medical criteria for addiction as adults started using risky addictive substances before age 18... If we're going to bring early prevention programs such as SBIRT up to the scale needed to fight this epidemic, lawmakers must act boldly. Making prevention a priority means allocating the funds necessary so every high school has the resources to implement robust prevention programs. It's time for Wisconsin to get out ahead of the crisis and ensure that more young people in the state have the opportunity to reach their full potential and realize the American dream.”

Read more from Citizen Action at www.citizenactionwi.org