



**Commonwealth of Kentucky
Cabinet for Health and Family Services**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact: Barbara Fox
502-564-6786, ext. 3102

Beth Fisher
502-564-6786, ext.3101

**Kentucky Health Official Invited to Share Innovative
Strategies Addressing Opioid Epidemic at National
Conference of State Legislatures**

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 23, 2018) - Dr. Jeffrey D. Howard, Acting Commissioner at the Department for Public Health (DPH), within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS), will represent the state during a national Opioid Policy session this weekend. Organized by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), The Opioid Policy Fellows roundtable will discuss opioid addiction and overdose issues. The session runs January 26-28 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

“This event is a unique opportunity for us to provide public health insight on the opioid epidemic and allow us to meet with the State Legislative Health Committee Chairs to discuss opioid addiction and overdose issues,” said Dr. Howard. “Participating in this key policy influencer round table session is a good opportunity to spotlight innovative strategies we have implemented in Kentucky and allows us to bolster relationships with our peers. It will also foster dialogue and provide legislators with open discussions on

successes, challenges and key areas that need to be addressed to successfully fight the opioid epidemic that is plaguing our nation at this time.”

Kentucky is taking a lead role in addressing the state’s opioid crisis by supporting implementation of a comprehensive array of prevention, treatment, recovery supports and harm reduction strategies. Several innovative approaches are underway now which place Kentucky in the forefront of national efforts to combat this crisis and save lives. Some examples include: rapid access to treatment for those who experienced an overdose; a mobile pharmacy unit to provide naloxone education and dispensing; expanded treatment programs for pregnant and parenting women with substance use disorders (SUD); creation of FindHelpNowKy.org website to guide Kentuckians to SUD treatment; recovery support for young adults; and enhancements to the prescription drug monitoring program known as KASPER which will support improved prescribing practices.

Goals for the NCSL roundtable meeting include:

- Building knowledge about new research and policy.
- Exchanging ideas and solutions related to opioid misuse and overdose, and related issues.
- Meeting and learning from other legislative leaders.
- Connecting with leading researchers and policy experts.
- Identifying practical information to use in states and developing action steps.
- Setting the stage for the work with the Opioid Policy Fellows and providing issue content in a peer learning setting.

States that have legislative representation include: Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, New Jersey, New Mexico, Nevada, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont and Washington.

The Opioid Policy Fellows program is designed for building state leadership and support for legislators who are experienced or emerging leaders on opioid addiction and

overdose issues. The event is funded by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and NCSL.

-30-

The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services, the Department for Public Health, and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.