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National City-County Task Force on the Opioid Epidemic Holds Inaugural Convening

County, city leaders focus on collaboration to combat prescription drug abuse, heroin use in communities nationwide

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Local leaders from across the country have come together to take action in response to the rapid escalation and deadly impact of prescription drug abuse and heroin use in cities and counties. The [National City-County Task Force on the Opioid Epidemic](#) convened on April 7 for its inaugural meeting in Washington to share experiences, engage with national experts and explore solutions to stem the tide of drug abuse and related fatalities.

A joint initiative by the [National League of Cities](#) (NLC) and the [National Association of Counties](#) (NACo), the [24-member task force](#) explored how cities and counties can strengthen collaboration with each other and state, federal, private-sector and non-profit partners to tackle the opioid crisis.

"City and county officials from around the country came together to talk about the challenges in communities facing an opioid crisis," said Task Force Co-Chair and National League of Cities (NLC) Second Vice President Mark Stodola, mayor of Little Rock, Ark. "The National City-County Task Force on the Opioid Epidemic explored how to establish prevention and education measures, effective treatment options and increase overall public safety and community wellness. These conversations today are a great starting point as we begin to tackle the difficult realities that stem from opioid abuse in our communities."

"We see firsthand the devastating impacts of opioid abuse every day," said Task Force Co-Chair Judge/Executive Gary Moore, Boone County, Ky. "We are addressing this crisis in our local communities, and together, we can leverage our experience and expertise to make a difference nationally. This task force is focused on collaborating to achieve results on the ground where this epidemic is occurring."

Prevention and education, treatment, public safety and community wellness were front and center on the task force's agenda. Local leaders shared information about challenges and effective local responses that could be replicated in communities across the country.

Drug overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, with more than 47,000 lethal drug overdoses in 2014. This epidemic is driven largely by overdose deaths related to prescription pain relievers (18,893) and deaths related to heroin (10,574).

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Following today's convening, the task force will take the following actions:

- Continue national dialogues where city and county leaders will explore the main impacts of this crisis and comprehensive responses that have proven to be effective
- Convene special forums, webinars and other opportunities to engage with national experts, federal, state and other partners; and
- Publish a national summary report with policy recommendations and best practices that promote prevention and education, effective treatment options, public safety and community wellness.
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NACo President Sallie Clark [announced](#) the creation of the task force at NACo's Legislative Conference in February. NLC President Melodee Colbert-Kean, councilmember from Joplin, Mo. and Clark, an El Paso County, Colo. commissioner, [named the 24-member task force](#) at NLC's Congressional City Conference in March.

For a list of task force members and more information, visit: www.naco.org/OpioidTaskForce and www.nlc.org/OpioidTaskForce.

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About the National Association of Counties (NACo)

The National Association of Counties (NACo) unites America's 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public's understanding of county government and exercise exemplary leadership in public service. More information at: www.naco.org.

About the National League of Cities (NLC)

The National League of Cities (NLC) is dedicated to helping city leaders build better communities. NLC is a resource and advocate for 19,000 cities, towns and villages, representing more than 218 million Americans. www.nlc.org