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Social Services | Public Health | Mental Health

news release

Sept. 14, 2016

County's opioid prescription rates declining

The amount of opioids prescribed in Humboldt County is going down. Opioids are a type of painkiller that can have serious side effects including overdose and death. Since 2009, more people have died from opioid overdose than car crashes in the United States, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has made fighting the opioid epidemic a public health priority.

According to the CDC, one in four people who are prescribed opioids for chronic pain develop issues with addiction. The CDC has released new prescribing guidelines to try to curb the epidemic.

Since 2010, the amount of opioids prescribed in Humboldt County has decreased by 23 percent. The number of opioid prescriptions per person has gone down 11 percent, from 128.6 to 114 prescriptions per 100 people. More Humboldt prescribers are using CURES, the California prescription drug monitoring system, which helps prevent prescription opiate misuse.

These reductions are due in part to the efforts of Rx Safe Humboldt, a community coalition focused on reducing harms from opioids. Coalition members include local doctors and nurses, community members, pharmacists, public health and mental health professionals, and local organizations including the Humboldt Independent Practice Association (IPA).

Coalition efforts are focused on changing prescribing practices, providing alternative treatments for chronic pain, increasing access to medication assisted treatment, increasing access to the overdose antidote Naloxone, and providing safe ways to dispose of expired and used medications.

Rx Safe Humboldt created a resource guide with information on non-pharmaceutical approaches to pain management. The guide includes a list of providers for acupuncture, chiropractic work, strength training, massage and other non-pharmaceutical therapies. The guide is available at www.rxsafehumboldt.org/.

On Sept. 22, Rx Safe Humboldt will bring partners together to address Humboldt County's opioid epidemic. The event will be at the Sequoia Conference Center and will include live streamed presentations and sessions from a statewide convening of opioid safety coalitions in Oakland. Topics include how to treat chronic pain, discussion of the opioid epidemic, and breakout sessions about law enforcement efforts, Naloxone and others.

To register for this event, go to www.chcf.org/events/2016/events-opioid-safety-coalitions-fall-convenings.

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