

Office of the Kane County State's Attorney



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U.S. HEALTH OFFICIAL MEETS WITH STATE'S ATTORNEY McMAHON, JUDGE HULL TO DISCUSS OPIOID EPIDEMIC

HHS DIRECTOR O'BRIEN: FOCUS ON COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH, CONTINUUM OF CARE

June 7, 2019

Kane County State's Attorney Joe McMahon on June 5, 2019, hosted Douglas S. O'Brien, Region V Director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, along with Kane County Circuit Judge Clint Hull, to discuss ways to address drug addiction in Kane County, particularly the opioid crisis.

Kane County, like many counties across the United States, has been hit hard by the opioid crisis, which began with the overprescribing of opioid painkillers and morphed into widespread heroin addiction. Kane County has reported a steady rise in opioid-related deaths over the last decade, reaching 67 in 2017 and 68 in 2018.

O'Brien recommends that Kane County take a comprehensive approach led by a single agency. He said such an approach allows for better follow-up from the initial seeking of treatment through longer-term care to ensure a successful recovery.

"If we can focus on a continuum of care with efficiency, we can ease the crisis," said O'Brien, who said he believes the effort will be successful if led locally. He noted that county-based agencies have been successful across the Midwest.

O'Brien said each community's solutions should be individually tailored, and that some approaches might work in some communities, but not in others.

"Find ways that are cost effective. Start thinking of needle exchanges and housing as ways to reduce costs," O'Brien said.

O'Brien said the removal of the stigma of seeking treatment for addiction is an important part of the road out of the current opioid addiction crisis.

"Seeking treatment is the single most heroic act a person can take," he said.

State's Attorney McMahon said:

"Director O'Brien has met with leaders across the Midwest in an effort to coordinate federal resources for the treatment of drug and alcohol addiction.

“I appreciate him and Judge Hull taking the time to discuss opioid addiction, its impact on the community and the availability of federal resources to address it.

“I am pleased that Mr. O’Brien supports our comprehensive community approach to administering treatment, both short-term and long-term as the best path to a successful outcome for addicts and for the community as a whole. This was an opportunity to meet with a senior federal official for health and Human Services and share our observations, and also the great work being done by my colleagues, like coroner Rob Russell and Sheriff Ron Hain to treat addiction and drug use as a community health issue before it becomes a law enforcement issue or worse, another sad statistic for our coroner.”

DRAFT