

## MEDIA RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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### **County Wins Federal Opioid Response Grant DOJ funds to expand Rx and Heroin Suppression**

(Oxnard, CA) – The Ventura County Behavioral Health Department, in cooperation with the County’s Prescription Drug Abuse and Heroin Workgroup, announced today that the County of Ventura has been awarded a competitive grant under the Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Site-based Program; federal funding provided by the U.S. Department of Justice to combat opioid misuse.

The Behavioral Health Department’s successful proposal for \$935,401 was funded in full; falling just under the \$1 million maximum and the largest award of two California county grants in this category.

Dr. Loretta Denering, Division Chief for Alcohol and Drug Programs noted, “With this new funding, we will dramatically expand our ability to leverage information from multiple sources—our behavioral health, public health, emergency medical services, medical examiner and public safety data—to analyze trends and target efforts to reduce local impacts.”

The award marks the first major funding dedicated to addressing local opioid issues and the plan enjoyed endorsements from many agencies. “This is truly about data-driven collaboration,” said Sheriff Geoff Dean, who was a strong supporter of the proposed approach, “We know that opioid abuse is really hitting home here in Ventura County, and it takes strong teamwork to reverse the trends we’ve seen over the last decade.”

The Behavioral Health Department launched the Prescription Drug and Heroin Workgroup in 2012, in response to the-then emerging trend of drug diversion and so-called “doctor shopping,” where opioid-involved drug users seek out willing doctors to provide strong painkillers that patients can either use or sell illegally on the street. Since then, the group has grown to include a wide range of public and private organizations working together to support safe prescribing, pharmaceutical crimes enforcement, overdose prevention, and expanded treatment.

For the last six years, more Americans have died from drug overdose than any other kind of accidental death—more than traffic crashes and gun violence-- according the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In Ventura County, more than 100 accidental deaths each year are attributed to drug overdose, with the majority involving powerful opioids.

To learn more, residents can visit [www.VenturaCountyResponds.org](http://www.VenturaCountyResponds.org)