



The Maryland State Medical Society

2018 KEY LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

OPIOID CRISIS – FUNDING PRIORITIES

THE PROBLEM: As the number of overdoses and deaths attributed to opioids continues to escalate, addressing the crisis will remain a top priority for the General Assembly, the Governor and MedChi in the 2018 Session. During the 2017 Session, MedChi worked hard to partner with the State to fight this crisis while at the same time ensuring that physicians maintain needed flexibility to treat each patient’s health care needs. Passage of the Heroin and Opioid Prevention Effort (HOPE) and Treatment Act of 2017 is a key component in the State’s battle against opioid overdoses and deaths. However, additional funding is needed to expand treatment capacity, develop crisis response centers statewide, and address the provider payment issues for community based providers that serve those with substance use disorders, mental health disorders or a combination of those disorders. Furthermore, a number of the other notable provisions of the HOPE Act have not yet been implemented such as a toll-free hotline with information on behavioral health programs, expanded drug court programs, the development of co-prescribing information for providers; and consumer information on opioid use disorders that providers can make available to their patients.

SOLUTION: Advocate for adequate funding and the implementation of the provisions of the HOPE Act including:

- Funding for the development of crisis centers in all jurisdictions in the State;
- Expanded behavioral health treatment capacity;
- Increased community behavioral health provider reimbursement as statutorily defined;
- Expanded drug court programs sufficient to meet each County’s needs;
- Establishment of a toll-free health crisis hotline that includes information on behavioral health programs;
- Development of written information by the Maryland Department of Health concerning opioid use disorders to distribute to health care facilities and health care providers that treat opioid use disorders so they can make it available to patients;

WHAT TO DO: Call/email/write to your legislators and members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee, House Appropriations Committee, Senate Budget and Taxation Committee, and Senate Finance Committee to fully fund and implement the programs enacted in the HOPE Act of 2017 and to protect a physician’s ability to appropriately treat each patient’s needs while continuing to enhance and improve the clinical tools available to physicians to assist them in both preventing and treating substance use disorders. Contact MedChi for legislative contact information at 1-800-492-1056.