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DOH AND DCF LEADERSHIP VISIT PINELLAS COUNTY CORE NETWORK

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Pinellas County, Fla. – Yesterday, Florida Department of Health Deputy Secretary for Health Dr. Kenneth Schepke, and Florida Department of Children and Families Secretary Shevaun Harris, alongside community partners, visited the expansion of the [Coordinated Opioid Recovery \(CORE\)](#) in Pinellas County - a comprehensive network of addiction and opioid treatment.

This year, Florida has experienced over **4,000** reported fatal overdoses. In Pinellas County, emergency medical services reported that in 2021, teams responded to over 15,000 overdose calls.



The CORE Network is the first of its kind in the nation, coordinated through the Florida Department of Health (DOH), Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Agency for Health Care Administration. The full-scale treatment approach of the CORE Network expands every aspect of overdose response and creates an all-inclusive sustained system of care and patient navigation to address all primary and secondary impacts of substance use disorder.

“The existing standard of care for substance use disorder is outdated. The current overdose response in most of the United States treats the acute overdose, without providing access to sustainable care,” **said DOH Dr. Kenneth Schepcke, Deputy Secretary for Health.** “That’s exactly why we’ve developed CORE. This program facilitates the necessary connections among local emergency response and specialty health care networks to not only respond to an acute overdose, but to connect individuals suffering from substance use disorder to sustainable and long-term care.”

“The CORE Network is ultimately a testament of Florida’s ongoing commitment and determination to reduce the devastating impact that opioids are having on our children, our families, and our communities,” **said DCF Secretary Shevaun Harris.** “By working on prevention and intervention efforts, we can take a holistic approach that supports our primary goal of building strong and resilient families.”

Substance abuse is a chronic multifaceted life-threatening disease. If an individual in Pinellas County overdoses, specialized emergency medical services protocol will begin while transporting the patient to a specialty hospital with attained specialty expertise in addiction medicine. Once all emergent health threats are stabilized, the patient’s long term care needs will be transferred to an expert multi-specialty outpatient practice to support sustainable recovery.

CORE provides a personalized treatment umbrella ranging from primary care to mental health support. By facilitating these connections in Pinellas County, CORE disrupts the revolving door of addiction by connecting overdoses to sustainable care in real time.

If you, or someone you know, is struggling with substance use disorder and would like more information on CORE in Pinellas County, you may contact [211 Tampa Bay Cares](#) at 2-1-1 or the [Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County](#).

If you suspect an overdose, call 911 immediately. The state of Florida has deployed [resources](#) that can be posted in public areas to ensure Floridians remain vigilant of the signs of overdose, how to respond, and where help is available.

About the CORE Network

CORE was successfully piloted in Palm Beach County for nearly two years and will be expanding in additional counties to help patients break free from the deadly cycle of overdose. Floridians battling with addiction can utilize CORE for stabilization and to receive medication assisted treatment from a network of specialized medical experts that will help guide them on a sustained pathway to healthy success.

Florida is proud of its efforts in fighting the opioid epidemic and continues do so with access, evidence-based care, and lifelong comprehensive treatment. Learn more [about CORE and various recovery resources](#).

About the Florida Department of Health

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