



## **CITY, COUNTY, AND STATE NEWS**

**ALBUQUERQUE, NM:** [County commissioner asks first lady for help bringing more mental health resources to New Mexico](#): A Bernalillo County Commissioner spoke with First Lady Dr. Jill Biden about bringing more mental health resources to New Mexico. District 5 County Commissioner Charlene Pyskoty said addressing crime and homelessness starts with addressing mental health. "And not everyone started out with a good life. A lot of people have trauma in their background and so when that goes untreated, people act out sometimes in bad ways," Pyskoty said. Commissioner Pyskoty, who is a licensed therapist, spoke with Dr. Biden during her visit to New Mexico last week. She asked the first lady for help to address the shortage of mental health providers in New Mexico.

**CHICAGO, IL:** [Latino Youth Face a Mental Health Crisis](#): News of 13-year-old Adam Toledo's fatal shooting by Chicago police left many in the city's Latino community struggling to process yet another trauma in what has already been a difficult year. Nestor Flores, director of behavioral health initiatives at [Pilsen Wellness Center](#), says reactions to the Toledo shooting by the families his organization serves "run the spectrum." "It goes from shock to fear to ambivalence to 'we've seen this before.' This is what our communities are usually like. Unfortunately, in our clinics, we obviously treat when it gets to the shock part with the fear part because it does lead to an increase in symptoms and anxiety, depression," he said. Health professionals are also warning that watching the police body camera video of Toledo's death can be particularly damaging to the mental and emotional health of Latino youth.

**CT:** [President Biden Nominates CT Commissioner as Assistant Secretary for Mental Health & Substance Use](#): President Joe Biden announced that he has nominated Dr. Miriam Delphin-Rittmon as the assistant secretary for mental health and substance use. Delphin-Rittmon currently serves as the commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. In her new position, she will lead the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), according to Governor Ned Lamont. Delphin-Rittmon is a Meriden resident who has served as the head of the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services since 2015, according to state officials.

**IOWA:** [Opioid deaths in Iowa increased 35 percent in 2020](#)  
Opioid-related deaths increased by 35 percent in Iowa in 2020, following a national trend that has advocates raising the alarm about the surge. State officials reported 212 opioid-related deaths last year, up from the 157 deaths reported in 2019, according to [provisional data from the Iowa Department of Public Health](#). In 2019, 157 people died from opioid overdoses. The previous high for opioid overdose deaths was 206 in 2017. The number of deaths declined in 2018 but has been increasing since, state data shows. State and federal public health experts say factors related to the pandemic likely contributed, including isolation and reduced access to health care services

due to social distancing and other safety precautions. But state public health officials say it's too early to directly link COVID-19 to the increase.

**SOMERVILLE, MA:** [State public health officials award \\$720,000 for support services for young adults in recovery](#) :

The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) announced a \$720,000 grant award to the national organization Young People in Recovery for the development of statewide support programs for young adults recovering from substance addiction. With this funding, Young People in Recovery will develop, build, and maintain seven recovery support networks strategically positioned in areas of critical need throughout the Commonwealth, providing young people ages 18-25 the life skills and peer supports they need to recover from opioid use, stimulant use, or other substance use disorders and co-occurring substance use and mental illness. The program launches in April 2021 with the capacity to serve approximately 1,400 people annually.

**TALLAHASSEE, TN:** [City Launches Mental Health Crisis Response Unit](#):

The new Tallahassee Emergency Assessment Mobile Unit (TEAM) is actively responding to non-violent 9-1-1 calls for service with individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. The pilot program was approved last fall as the City Commission voted to implement special mental health initiatives in response to an emergent mental health need during the COVID-19 pandemic and other critical public safety incidents. City staff from the Tallahassee Police Department (TPD), Tallahassee Fire Department (TFD), Consolidated Dispatch Agency (CDA) and Housing & Community Resilience department have been working with The Apalachee Center to develop the framework of a pilot mental health crisis response unit for several months. Initiatives like TEAM are designed to advance the City's long-term strategic priority of building a safe, resilient and inclusive community through proactive, community-based solutions that enhance public safety. "We know that many people in our community are struggling with mental health, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this innovative City program, TPD and TFD provide specialized support to members of our community in need. Engaging the TEAM after a non-violent mental health crisis call comes in to the CDA ensures that we connect highly skilled first responders and mental health professionals with residents in crisis," Mayor John Dailey said.

## **NATIONAL**

[Bipartisan Addiction & Mental Health Task Force meets for the first time](#)

Four members of Congress, from both sides of the aisle, have created an Addiction and Mental Health Task Force to address two crises facing our nation: the COVID-19 pandemic, and substance abuse/mental health problems. The bipartisan task force held their first roundtable on Thursday, April 29, with guests Dr. Chris Jones, Deputy Director of the C.D.C. Injury Center and Dr. Wilson Compton, Deputy Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The round table lasted for an hour and a half, and the doctors were able to give insight on the groups focus areas. The task force's main goal is to put together bills that will be passed and signed into law to successfully address substance abuse and mental health issues. The task force is made up of Representative Annie Kuster (D-NH), Representative David Trone (D-MD), Representative Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) and Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA).

[House votes to extend ban on fentanyl-like substances](#)

The House easily passed legislation on Wednesday to extend a ban on copycats of fentanyl, a highly addictive synthetic opioid, that is set to expire on May 6 without congressional action. Lawmakers passed the bill by voice vote to extend through Oct. 22 the federal government's

ability to regulate fentanyl analogues as one of the most strictly controlled drugs with no accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse. Synthetic opioids — including fentanyl, which is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine — are the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths in the U.S. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [reported](#) more than 50,000 deaths involving all synthetic opioids in a 12-month period ending in July 2020.

## **WEEKEND READING**

[Chicago Tribune](#): Editorial: Helping jail inmates kick an opioid addiction helps us all

[Denver Post](#): Opinion: Mental health should be treated as a public health need

[Greener Ideal](#): 5 Surprising Ways Green Spaces in Cities Affect Mental Health

**\*\*The information compiled in this email originated from the following news sources: The Gazette, NBC Connecticut, Tallahassee Reports, WDVM, WTTW\*\***