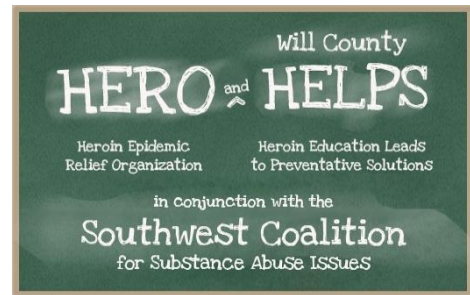


**THE HEROIN CRISIS ACT:
WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU**
April 29, 2016

Edward Hospital Athletic and Events Center
55 Phelps Ave., Romeoville, IL



Southwest Coalition
for Substance Abuse Issues



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Troubling stats, developments on fatal overdoses as public officials gather for Will County Summit to combat deadly heroin epidemic

ROMEDEVILLE – The need for an effective overall strategy to combat the heroin epidemic is more important than ever as the number of overdose deaths in Will County and across the nation continues to rise.

With the 2016 HERO-HELPS-Southwest Coalition Community Summit scheduled for the end of April, the Will County Coroner's Office reports troubling statistics and alarming new developments in the heroin crisis.

The summit, scheduled from 8 a.m. until noon on April 29 at the Edward Hospital Athletic and Event Center in Romeoville, will focus on the groundbreaking Illinois Heroin Crisis Act that was passed in 2015. But even as the state implements this forward-looking initiative that targets heroin addiction, the number of overdose deaths continues to rise.

Will County Coroner Patrick O'Neil, who will discuss the epidemic at the Summit, reports 18 fatal overdoses in 2016 with toxicology reports pending in four additional cases. This puts Will County on track to break the sad record of 53 deaths in both 2012 and 2015.

But in a troubling twist, the coroner reports that in three of the confirmed 2016 overdoses, the victims used powerful synthetic opioid painkillers like Furanyl fentanyl or Acetyl fentanyl, both of which are considered designer drugs that are being sold as a substitute for heroin. These synthetic derivatives can be extremely more potent than heroin, making them even more deadly.

"The Heroin Crisis Act is a comprehensive bill designed to combat heroin addiction and save lives," said Paul Lauridsen, clinical director at Stepping Stones treatment center and the Summit chairman. "But even as we begin to put this plan into action, we find ourselves grappling with disturbing new developments that remind us our work is far from over."

The Heroin Crisis Act will give the public an even clearer picture of how widespread the crisis is as it requires greater reporting by hospitals regarding the number of patients who receive treatment for heroin overdoses and survive.

The Summit will bring together professionals from many disciplines to discuss the Heroin Crisis Act. Four free continuing education units are provided for many professions including educators; physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals; social work and professional counselors; and addiction prevention, treatment and recovery support professionals.

For more information, visit the website: www.herohelpsevent.com.