



# News Release

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## **USDA Launches Webpage Highlighting Resources to Help Rural Communities Address the Opioid Crisis**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 22, 2018 – Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett today unveiled a new [webpage](#) featuring resources to help rural communities respond to the opioid crisis.

“While no corner of the country has gone untouched by the opioid crisis, small towns and rural places have been particularly hard hit,” Hazlett said. “The challenge of opioid misuse is an issue of rural prosperity and will take all hands on deck to address. The webpage we are launching today will help rural leaders build a response that is tailored to meet the needs of their community.”

The National Center for Health Statistics estimates that more than 63,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2016. More than half of those deaths involved opioids, including prescription drugs and heroin.

USDA is playing an important role to help rural communities address this national problem at the local level through program investment, strategic partnerships and best practice implementation.

In April 2017, President Donald J. Trump established the Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity to identify legislative, regulatory and policy changes that could promote agriculture and prosperity in rural communities. In January 2018, Secretary Perdue presented the Task Force’s findings to President Trump, which included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America.

In the area of quality of life, the Task Force included a recommendation to modernize health care access. The report highlighted the importance of telemedicine in enhancing access to primary care and specialty providers. The Task Force also found that improved access to mental and behavioral health care, particularly prevention, treatment and recovery resources, is vital to addressing the opioid crisis and other substance misuse in rural communities.

To view the report in its entirety, please view the [Report to the President of the United States from the Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity](#) (PDF, 5.4 MB). In addition, to view the categories of the recommendations, please view the [Rural Prosperity infographic](#) (PDF, 190 KB).

USDA Rural Development provides loans and grants to help expand economic opportunities and create jobs in rural areas. This assistance supports infrastructure improvements; business development; housing; community services such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit [www.rd.usda.gov](http://www.rd.usda.gov).

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