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News Release

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USDA Launches Interactive Data Tool to Help Rural Communities Address the Opioid Crisis

New Community Assessment Tool Empowers Rural Leaders to Make Data-Driven Decisions to Build Resilient Communities

WASHINGTON, Oct. 4, 2018 – Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett today announced the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has launched an interactive data tool to help community leaders build grassroots strategies to address the opioid epidemic.

“Under the leadership of President Trump, USDA is committed to being a strong partner to rural America in addressing this monumental challenge,” Hazlett said. “Local leaders in small towns across our country need access to user-friendly and relevant data to help them build grassroots solutions for prevention, treatment and recovery.”

The opioid misuse [Community Assessment Tool](#) enables users to overlay substance misuse data against socioeconomic, census and other public information. This data will help leaders, researchers and policymakers assess what actions will be most effective in addressing the opioid crisis at the local level.

The Community Assessment Tool is free and available to the public. It can be accessed on [USDA’s Rural Opioid Misuse Webpage](#) or at opioidmisusetool.norc.org/.

USDA’s launch of the Community Assessment Tool closely follows President Trump’s declaration of October as [National Substance Abuse Prevention Month](#). Approximately 72,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2017; 49,000 of those deaths involved an opioid. Many of these deaths have been fueled by the misuse of prescription pain medications. The severity of the current opioid misuse crisis requires immediate action.

Rural Development partnered with the Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis at NORC at the University of Chicago to create the Community Assessment Tool. NORC at the University of Chicago is a non-partisan research institution that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical programmatic, business and policy decisions. Today, government, corporate and nonprofit organizations around the world partner with NORC to transform increasingly complex

information into useful knowledge. The Walsh Center focuses on a wide array of issues affecting rural providers and residents, including health care quality and public health systems.

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. These findings included 31 recommendations to align the federal government with state, local and tribal governments to take advantage of opportunities that exist in rural America. Increasing investments in rural infrastructure is a key recommendation of the task force.

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 facilities such as schools, public safety and health care; and high-speed internet access in rural areas. For more information, visit www.rd.usda.gov.

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