



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Senator Leahy and Gov. Shumlin Announce \$12.4 Million Federal Grant for Statewide Expansion of Regional Substance Abuse Prevention Partnerships



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MONTPELIER – Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) joined Governor Peter Shumlin (D) at the State House Monday to announce a \$12.4 million federal grant intended to reduce prescription drug abuse, marijuana use and underage drinking among youths and young adults throughout Vermont.

The five-year substance abuse prevention grant, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), will support statewide expansion of Vermont's Regional Prevention Partnerships program. That program is now operating in six counties and is made possible by an earlier \$3.6 million federal grant, which expires this year.

Leahy and Shumlin said the new grant will allow the Vermont Department of Health to provide comprehensive prevention services at the regional level across the state and in every county, to youths and young adults of the ages of 12 to 25.

Leahy said: "The strength of this approach is that it involves many community and regional partners, from hospitals and schools, to Boys and Girls Clubs and planning commissions. This will be a comprehensive, strategic and statewide approach to breaking the cycle of drug and alcohol addiction before it starts. We know we need to reach young people at earlier ages than ever before, and this grant will go a long way toward making that possible. We also know that it is far less expensive, and far more productive, to prevent substance abuse on the front end, rather than having to deal with its life-altering consequences on the back end." Leahy, then-Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, held a March 2014 Judiciary Committee field hearing in Vermont focusing on community-wide approaches to countering opioid trends. He is the most senior member of the Appropriations Committee, which writes the annual funding bill for HHS.

Shumlin said: "Opiate addiction is the most serious challenge facing our state. We've made progress expanding treatment, saving lives through the distribution of overdose reversal kits, and changing the way we think about addiction. But we all know that the best way to tackle issues of addiction is to prevent people from getting addicted in the first place. This grant will help us bolster our efforts to do that, and I want to thank Sen. Leahy for his hard work to ensure this critical funding need is met."

Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD, said: "We've already seen some success in reducing high-risk drinking, marijuana use and opioid drug misuse among young Vermonters as a result of our collective efforts. This new commitment of federal dollars allows us to apply what we've learned through the partnerships to every corner of the state."

The new grant will expand the Regional Prevention Partnerships to include Addison, Bennington, Caledonia, Essex/Orleans, Franklin, and Windsor Counties.

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