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Arizona Criminal Justice Commission Receives Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Grant

\$374,000 Grant Will be Used to Implement Award-Winning Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse Initiative in Maricopa County

Phoenix, AZ, Tuesday, September 23, 2014 – Today, the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission (ACJC) announced that it has been awarded a \$374,408 grant by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance under the Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Program: Data-Driven Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Reducing Rx Abuse. The grant will be used to implement the award-winning *Arizona Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse Initiative* in Maricopa County.

“I am extremely pleased that Arizona was chosen to receive this Harold Rogers PDMP grant to build on the successful work that the Rx Initiative has already accomplished in our pilot counties,” said John A. Blackburn, Jr., Executive Director of the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission. “Thanks to the work of the local coalitions, Yavapai, Pinal, Graham and Greenlee, and Mohave County have already taken over 8,000 pounds of unwanted pills out of circulation thanks to prescription drug drop boxes.”

The Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) provides funding for Data-Driven Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Reducing Prescription Drug Abuse to localities and tribes to assemble a local collaborative effort of public health and criminal justice professionals to support innovative ways to use PDMP and other data to inform prevention, treatment, and enforcement efforts.

In Maricopa County, ACJC will be working with Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care and the Maricopa County Department of Health to support community-based substance abuse coalitions in their implementation of the *Arizona Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse Initiative*. Specifically, Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care will act as the Regional Behavioral Health Authority for Maricopa County and the Maricopa County Department of Health will be working to help increase the utilization of Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

Arizona, like most states in the country, is not immune from the prescription drug epidemic. From 2005 to 2012, the rate of emergency department cases related to opiate misuse or abuse more than doubled from 223 per 100,000 admissions in 2005 to more than 500 in 2012. During the same time, the rate of in-patient hospitalizations related to prescription pain reliever misuse or abuse in Arizona has nearly tripled from 693 per 100,000 emergency department discharges in 2005 to more than 1800 per 100,000 in 2012. The number of infants born with neo-natal abstinence syndrome also doubled from 150 infants in 2008 to 333 in 2013.

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"We're honored to be part of this broad-based partnership, which allows us to build on our relationships with physical and behavioral health providers using a public health approach," said Heather Brown, prevention administrator for Mercy Maricopa Integrated Care. "With this funding we can enhance the work already being done by our prevention partners and community coalitions to reduce prescription drug misuse and abuse in Maricopa County through education and outreach, such as giving parents the tools they need to talk to their kids."

The *Arizona Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse Initiative* is a data-driven, multi-disciplinary approach that utilizes community-based substance abuse coalitions as the agents of change. With oversight and support from a Core Group of senior level staff from the Governor's Office for Children, Youth, and Families, Arizona Department of Health Services, Arizona Board of Pharmacy (the agency that oversees Arizona's prescription monitoring program), and Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, the Arizona Rx Model takes advantage of the social capital that exists in the target county substance abuse coalitions and complements it with a strategic and targeted infusion of limited cash resources to implement the following five strategies:

- 1) Reduce illicit acquisition and diversion of prescription medications;
- 2) Promote responsible prescribing and dispensing practices;
- 3) Enhance Rx drug practices and policies among law enforcement;
- 4) Increase public awareness and patient education about Rx drug misuse and abuse; and
- 5) Enhance assessment and referral to treatment.

"The opportunity to bring these five critical, evidence-based strategies into the state's largest population could be a game changer in our efforts to reduce prescription drug abuse in Arizona," said Will Humble, Arizona Department of Health Services Director. "Congratulations to the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission for securing the funds to make it happen."

In 2013, Arizona's *Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse Initiative* was awarded the 2013 Western Region Outstanding Criminal Justice Program Award by the National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA). Each year NCJA recognizes five states whose criminal justice programs most effectively address crime-related issues within their communities in terms of innovation and delivery of concrete results. More information about Arizona's *Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse Initiative* can be found at: <http://www.azcjc.gov/acjc.web/rx/default.aspx>

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Created in 1982, the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission is a statutorily authorized entity mandated to carry out various coordinating, monitoring and reporting functions regarding the administration and management of criminal justice programs in Arizona. The ACJC serves as a resource and service organization for Arizona's criminal justice community on a myriad of issues ranging from drugs, gangs and victim assistance to criminal history, and crime laboratory enhancements.