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State completes nine opioid summits with significant community engagement

JEFFERSON CITY, MO –Missourians from every corner of the state filled auditoriums for a series of nine regional opioid summits held by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS), as part of a state-wide initiative that saw participation from directors and members of all 16 cabinet departments in the state. These summits created a collaborative opportunity for a variety of sectors—health care professionals, the faith community, state and local governments, law enforcement and more—to bring awareness to the issue, discuss the best interventions available, spur action and make local leaders the champions of this cause.

“As we’ve been in each region throughout the state, listening to people’s concerns, we have been incredibly moved by people’s willingness to share their experiences and by those who want to help,” said DHSS Director Dr. Randall Williams. “Governor Greitens and I heard a young woman who told us that before she got into recovery, she ‘was slowly waiting to die.’ Experiences like hers solidify our commitment to helping people like her move to recovery and prevent others from going down a path that leads to substance abuse.”

Each summit featured local and national thought leaders such as Dr. Ted Cicero, professor at Washington University in St. Louis with more than 50 years’ experience in the field of neuropharmacology; **James Shroba, Special Agent in Charge for the Drug Enforcement Agency St. Louis Field Division, covering a six-state area; Howard Weissman, executive director of the [National Council on Alcohol & Drug Abuse](#) ; and [Generation Rx](#)**, a nonprofit that provides free educational resources for parents, teachers and community groups. The summits also included panel discussions with local leaders and community members, creating the opportunity to listen to how the opioid crisis is affecting each region of the state.

“We’ve held these summits to align our local, state and national partners and to plan the way forward,” said Dr. Williams. “Next month, stakeholders from every Local Public Health Agency in the state will come together to discuss our next steps as we take what we’ve learned from each other and put it into practice.”

For anyone who was unable to attend one of the summits, livestreams of both the St. Louis and Springfield summits are available [here](#). The summits are part of the State of Missouri’s comprehensive, integrated and innovative approach to addressing the opioid crisis. For more information on the state’s initiatives, available resources and statistics related to the crisis, please visit <https://opioids.mo.gov/>.

About the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services: The department seeks to be the leader in promoting, protecting and partnering for health. More information about DHSS can be found at health.mo.gov.