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PLYMOUTH COUNTY DA'S OFFICE TO RECEIVE \$500,000 FEDERAL GRANT

BROCKTON -- Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz's Office has been awarded a federal grant that will enhance office efforts to reach drug endangered children.

The Plymouth County District Attorney's Office will receive the \$541,300 grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime (OVC). The grant was created to address an urgent gap in crime victim services related to the opioid epidemic and to expand upon existing or establish new programs to provide services to youth who are victimized as a result of the opioid crisis.

"Unfortunately, far too many children are being exposed to overdosing parents," DA Cruz said. "Securing this grant money will help assist us in enhancing the capacity of Plymouth County to respond to the trauma that these children are witnessing. Through training, direct services, and building community partnerships, we can help identify who these kids are and help them build up the resilience to overcome this adversity. I am hopeful that this approach at reaching children at a younger age, when they are most vulnerable will benefit them in the long run. This is an extremely competitive process and we are honored to have received this grant."

DA Cruz will use these critical funds to train law enforcement, schools, and community partners on identifying drug endangered children and developing the proper trauma sensitive response. In addition, DA Cruz is excited to partner with The Family Center at Community Connections of Brockton, a program of the United Way of Greater Plymouth County. The Family Center will be using funds to hire a Clinical Director to work directly with drug endangered children. The Clinical Director will also be working alongside Plymouth County Outreach, a collaboration of 28 police departments in Plymouth County dedicated to providing immediate outreach to overdose victims.

Opioid addiction in the home is the fastest growing Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) in Massachusetts and specifically in Plymouth County. In 2017, there

were 2,016 people died who of an overdose in Massachusetts. There were 147 fatalities in Plymouth County, and of those, 70 percent of individuals were aged 20–39, often the ages associated with having children. Furthermore, the majority of overdoses are occurring in a home.

In 2015, along with Sheriff Joseph McDonald, DA Cruz created the Plymouth County Drug Abuse Task Force in an effort to engage all community sectors to address the opiate overdose issue on several fronts – reducing the supply of drugs through prosecutions, enhancing the county’s capacity for data collection of overdose information, reducing the demand through education and prevention programs, and increasing access to treatment and recovery services.

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