



## Prescribed to Death – November 9, 2017

VIP WELCOME 1:30 pm

Debbie Hersman – NSC President and CEO – Prepared Remarks

Good afternoon!

Thank you for joining us as we kick off our national Stop Everyday Killers campaign. Chicago is our home, which is why we decided to launch here. But Chicago is the right place to start this campaign for so many reasons. You'll hear the Lt. Governor speak about what we're doing to locally address the epidemic. Illinois and our neighboring states have been hit especially hard.

It's impossible to turn on the news without hearing opioids mentioned at least once every single day.

In Chicago, 681 died from an overdose just this past year. 606 of these, 89% were caused by opioids, including heroin. Nationally, 22,000 people have perished just from opioids and fentanyl in 2015. We know that once we get the numbers for 2016, that figure will be much, much higher. While one in four are impacted by opioids nationwide, locally that figure is closer to one in three. These numbers are shocking. And while the numbers are important, that isn't what brings us together today.

It's about the faces you'll see on the Memorial wall. We have all become interconnected because of this crisis.

Earlier today, we released the latest survey the National Safety Council has conducted on the perception Americans have of opioids, drawn from 2,000 responses from both users and non-users.

What we found is that Americans still don't understand the risks associated with opioid prescriptions, and are largely unaware of the impact of opioids as well as the inherent risks. Overall, Americans are about as concerned about opioids as a potential cause of injury or death for their family as they are with airline travel. Needless to say, the dangers of opioid use is much, much higher. For those with a

prescription, sixty-one percent did not have any concerns regarding taking their opioids that were prescribed to them, and sixty-six percent were not concerned about any side effects, including addiction.

The good news, is that we can do something about it.

That is why we are here today – to communicate the scale as well as encourage the solutions that will help us stop everyday killers like opioids from continuing to ravage our communities.

We want everyone to walk away from this exhibit doing two things.

The first thing is get unused medication out of our medicine cabinets.

We know that 64 percent of users don't get their pills from a valid prescription. They're getting them from friends, family, or another source, so removing pills from circulation is crucial.

That's why we partnered with Stericycle, our Exclusive Waste Disposal Partner of the campaign. Charlie Alutto, Stericycle CEO is with us today. Thank you for providing all the postage paid Stericycle Seal & Send envelopes, to help everyday Americans send in their unused medication for proper disposal. These envelopes will also be available on NSC.org. We are working together to get these to as many people as possible.

The second thing we want people to do is speak with their doctors and pharmacists about the risks of opioids. We found that one third of those who are prescribed opioids, don't know or don't understand their medication is actually an opioid drug.



The 'Warn Me' labels we're sharing today can help us educate ourselves and others about the dangers of opioids and to find alternatives. The change starts with us.

One third of our neighbors, our co-workers, and our family members either are addicted themselves, know someone who is, or know someone who has died as a result. We are here to remember them, and put a face on the epidemic.

We are incredibly grateful to our survivor advocates Felicia, Avi, and Rigo – for helping transform their pain and loss into helping others see clearly. I encourage you to spend some time viewing their videos and learning their stories.

And if you have your own story to share, add a name to our digital memorial, or leave a note for someone in recovery on our Hope & Action Wall. The Memorial runs through November 16, so please spread the word and invite others to come and experience it.

By spreading awareness, and working together to educate others on the dangers of opioids, eliminate them from circulation, and empower everyday heroes to take action, we can stop everyday killers.

Now I would like to welcome one of our hometown heroes, Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti.

Back in August, Lt. Governor Sanguinetti joined us in Itasca for the 2017 Illinois Overdose Awareness Day rally at NSC headquarters. She got to meet our passionate advocates, participate in a Naloxone training, and shine a light on what the state is doing to curb the opioid epidemic here in Illinois. She is a committed partner in this fight, and we are honored to have her join us today.