Democratic Attorneys General Appeal ACA Ruling

A coalition of 17 attorneys general from 16 states, including Illinois, and the District of Columbia, today filed an appeal of a federal district court ruling in Texas that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is unconstitutional.

“Our goal is simple: to stand up for the law of the land – the Affordable Care Act – in order to keep healthcare affordable and accessible for millions of Americans,” said California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, who is leading the coalition's effort to defend the ACA. “This shouldn’t be a debate; the ACA has been the law for nearly a decade and is the backbone of our healthcare system. This case impacts nearly every American – workers covered by employers, families, women, children, young adults, and seniors – so we will lead the ACA's defense as long and far as it takes. It's troubling to think anyone would go back to the days when Americans with serious medical conditions like pregnancy or devastating illnesses like cancer or diabetes could be denied or charged more for coverage due to a preexisting condition.”

On Dec. 14, 2018, the district court issued an opinion in Texas v. U.S., ruling that the ACA was unconstitutional. On Dec. 30, 2018, the district court granted Attorney General Becerra’s request to certify the judgment for appeal, which was filed with the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. Today’s action sets the stage for what could be a lengthy legal battle leading to the U.S. Supreme Court in 2020.

New Resources, SANE Training in Chicago

Public Act 100-0775 significantly revised the Sexual Assault Survivors Emergency Treatment Act (SASETA) with many new requirements for hospitals effective Jan. 1, 2019.

The Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Services Implementation Task Force, established by the Act, has developed additional resources to aid in compliance with the new
requirements: hospital educational materials, a sample photo documentation policy including procedure and equipment suggestions, and a sample Memorandum of Understanding with a rape crisis center. Hospitals are not required to use these sample documents and they may be modified to meet the needs of the facility (so the two sample documents are Word documents).

See IHA's memo for more details about the additional resources. Also see IHA's previous memo that includes links to a summary of the law, webinar recording, slides, handouts, written Q&A, implementation timeline and other helpful information.

Meanwhile, the Office of the Illinois Attorney General has announced an Adult/Adolescent Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Training March 5-7, 2019, and a Foundation to Provide Sexual Assault Patient Care in the Emergency Room Training on March 12, 2019, in Chicago.

Please see the invitation, application and clinical training log for more information. For additional information or to be added to the email distribution list for upcoming SANE trainings, please contact Jaclyn Rodriguez, BSN, BS, RN, SANE-A, SANE Coordinator, Office of the Illinois Attorney General, at sane@atg.state.il.us.

CDC Update on Drug Overdose Deaths
A new analysis by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that U.S. overdose death rates linked to synthetic opioids, likely from illicitly manufactured fentanyl, increased more than 45 percent from 2016 to 2017 while death rates from heroin and prescription opioids – still high – remained stable.

The findings come from a CDC analysis of the latest available drug overdose death data and were published late last month in an early release from CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR). Among the key findings:

--There were more than 70,000 drug overdose deaths in 2017, with a rate of 21.7 per 100,000 population. The rate increased by nearly 10 percent from 2016.
--Opioids were involved in over two-thirds of overdose deaths in 2017.
--While overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids expanded, heroin- and prescription-opioid-involved deaths remained stable from 2016 to 2017. However, overdose death rates involving heroin and prescription opioids were, respectively, seven and four times higher in 2017 than in 1999.
--Illinois saw statistically significant increases in overdose death rates for all opioids (12.4 percent) and prescription opioids (29.7 percent) from 2016 to 2017.
In 2017, the rates of overdose deaths involving cocaine increased by more than 34 percent. The rate of overdose deaths involving psychostimulants increased by more than 33 percent.

The CDC says some preliminary indicators in 2018 point to possible improvements based on provisional data; confirmation will depend on final 2018 data and results of pending medical investigations.

“The drug overdose epidemic continues to evolve, with the involvement of many types of drugs including opioids, cocaine, and psychostimulants,” said Debra Houry, M.D., M.P.H., director of CDC’s National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. “This underscores the urgency for more timely and localized data to inform public health and public safety action.”

For more information, see a [CDC press release](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr) and the Dec. 21 MMWR.