

## **Trump administration extending opioid emergency declaration**

By Brianna Ehley

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The Trump administration is extending an emergency declaration for the opioid crisis after accomplishing little under the order since it was announced three months ago.

A notice [posted](#) to the HHS website Friday said acting Secretary Eric Hargan would extend the public health emergency, which was originally declared in late October. The order was originally set to expire Tuesday.

The designation gives federal health agencies the authority to quickly hire more treatment specialists and reallocate money to strengthen the response to the epidemic that killed more than 42,000 Americans in 2016.

"This is further evidence of the Trump administration's strong, ongoing commitment to addressing this crisis and protecting the health and well-being of the American people," a HHS spokesperson said Friday evening.

But public health experts contend that the emergency declaration so far has produced very little of consequence. President Donald Trump has not proposed new funding or resources to help states respond to the crisis, and his administration has yet to launch the massive media campaign he promised in October.

Trump also has not yet named top officials to lead key agencies combating the crisis, and POLITICO reported Thursday that he plans to propose cutting the Office of National Drug Control Policy's 2019 budget by 95 percent.

The administration has taken steps outside of the emergency declaration to respond to the crisis, including updating guidance on how states can expand access to inpatient treatment under Medicaid, advancing research into non-opioid pain medication at NIH and clarifying how doctors can share substance abuse information without violating privacy laws. The CDC has also launched an awareness campaign to educate people about addiction.

Some public health experts said renewing the emergency declaration would be helpful if the Trump administration dedicates new funding.

"We are hopeful the administration and Congress will use this renewal to focus on getting new dollars to states to scale up treatment, recovery and prevention programs," said Mike Fraser, executive director of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

Public health emergencies, under the Public Health Service Act, must be declared by the HHS secretary — or in this case, the acting secretary, with HHS lacking a permanent leader since Tom Price's resignation in September.

Last week, a White House official told POLITICO it was Hargan's decision whether to extend the public health emergency.

The new declaration will last until April 23.

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