



July 08, 2016

Office of Governor Nikki R. Haley
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

1310 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005
202.626.4800
www.BCBS.com

Dear Governor Haley:

The Blue Cross Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) had the honor of taking part in the National Governors Association Winter Meeting last February where we shared with you our commitment to fight the opioid epidemic. We understand this is a pressing issue for our states' leaders, and we assure you BCBSA is dedicated to partnering with you and your staff, and with healthcare professionals and communities throughout the nation, to find a workable solution to this growing crisis.

As we announced then, BCBSA is partnering with a PBS affiliate to fund an educational documentary that presents a firsthand account of the struggles of opioid addiction and its impact on our families and our communities. As part of the documentary project, we will be collaborating with PBS to develop an accompanying school curriculum for grades 7-12 that will be available to teachers across the country free of charge. The work on "Understanding the Opioid Epidemic" is almost complete, and we are excited that a preview of one of the documentary's compelling stories will be screened at the NGA Summer Meeting in Des Moines on July 14th. We are also excited that the director of the documentary, John Grant, will participate in the panel discussion during NGA's "PurpleDocs" session to discuss the documentary and to answer questions. **We invite you and your staff to attend the PurpleDocs Film Festival on Thursday, July 14 from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. in room 314 of the Iowa Events Center** for the screening and to meet the film's director.

BCBSA remains steadfast in fulfilling our commitment and can report we are making progress toward delivering on the other commitments we announced in February, including:

- **Establishing an executive-level committee** that has brought together experts from BCBS companies around the country in pharmacology, psychology, addiction, policy, strategy and business to develop recommendations on how the BCBS System can collaborate with healthcare professionals, government officials and communities to address the opioid epidemic and prevent addiction.
- **Tapping into the BCBS System's industry-leading data capabilities** to uncover deeper insights into the prevalence of opioid addiction in the U.S. and its impact on the nation's healthcare system. We will be issuing a public report highlighting the key findings to help advance current discussion on opioids.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to put an end to this growing crisis. If you have any questions, please contact Clay McClure, (202) 596-6224 or clay.mcclure@bcbsa.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott P. Serota".

Scott P. Serota
President and CEO

UNDERSTANDING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

A Production of WNED-TV Buffalo - Toronto and Driftwood Productions

Every day, 44 people in the United States die from an overdose of prescription painkillers, and many more become addicted. Overprescribing of opioids continues to fuel this epidemic.

At least half of all U.S. opioid overdose deaths involve a prescription opioid. In 2014, almost two million Americans abused or were dependent on opioid drugs, and more than 14 thousand people died from overdoses involving prescription painkillers.

The opioid epidemic is different from previous drug crises in the United States. There are problems in virtually every area of the country, and opioid abuse reaches into every neighborhood and socioeconomic group.

Cities and states across the country have taken steps to improve painkiller prescribing, and control prescription misuse, abuse and overdose. Those efforts are showing some progress. From 2013 through 2015, opioid prescriptions have declined – the first such drop in 20 years. But even with fewer prescriptions being written, the number of deaths from opioid overdoses continues to rise.

Prescription drugs are safe and effective when prescribed and used properly. These painkillers are heavily marketed to the public, making it difficult to convey the idea that they are also harmful. Communication and education are critical components needed to curb the abuse of prescription painkillers.

Understanding the Opioid Epidemic is a one-hour public television documentary tracing the history and causes of the current epidemic. It features people at the frontlines of this issue, and includes powerful personal stories of tragedy and hope. The program will be accompanied by a nationwide education and community engagement component including potential partnerships between local public television stations and their community Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies. There will also be extensive resources on the program's companion website including videos, education materials (grades 7-12 curriculum), and a community engagement toolkit.

WNED | WBFO is a community-licensed public broadcast service that serves a binational region across Western New York and Southern Ontario with a combination of television, radio and online services. WNED-TV is an established creator of television content for regional and national distribution. **Understanding the Opioid Epidemic** is intended for national public television broadcast and distribution.

Understanding the Opioid Epidemic is made possible with funding from the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

The Blue Cross Blue Shield Association is an association of independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies.





TICKET

MEETING ROOM 314
IOWA EVENTS CENTER

DATE: 7/14/2016
TIME: 3:30 - 5 P.M.



★ NGA Summer Meeting: PurpleDocs Film Festival ★

Advance preview of

UNDERSTANDING THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC



Airing on Public Television

Hear from director John Grant, as he shares the personal stories of tragedy and hope and the experiences of those serving on the frontlines of the epidemic.

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