

What declaring the opioid crisis a “national emergency” means

On August 10, 2017, President Trump declared the opioid crisis a “national emergency”

In general, the declaration of an emergency expedites access to resources and tools to combat a crisis



There are two ways to provide funding for a “national emergency,” the Stafford Act and the Public Health Service Act

Either law would allow Section 1135 waivers for Medicaid

- This would allow HHS to bypass hurdles that normally apply to Medicaid
 - For example, Medicaid funds cannot normally be used to reimburse services from inpatient facilities that treat “mental diseases.” Waiving this would allow states to open more treatment options

The Stafford Act

- Requires a declaration from the president and would allow resources typically reserved for natural disasters to be used to fight the epidemic
- Could be used to coordinate federal and states agencies, allowing them to hone in on the crisis
- Funding would come from the federal disaster relief fund, which amounts to about **\$1.4 billion**

The Public Health Service Act

- Requires a declaration from the secretary of HHS, Tom Price, and would then allow resources and tools from HHS to be used to combat the epidemic
- Would allow mobilization and deployment of medical staff in underserved areas
- Could be used to waive state licensing requirements, allowing addiction specialists to go into areas that currently lack access to care

Sources: Ford, “Trump Informally Declares the Opioid Crisis a National Emergency,” The Atlantic, August 10, 2017; Lopez, “What declaring a national emergency over the opioid epidemic could actually do,” Vox, August 10, 2017; Schallhorn, “Trump declares opioid epidemic national emergency – here’s what that means,” Fox News, August 11, 2017.