



# Position Statement

## **Opioid, Narcotic and Psychoactive Substance Abuse**

No one understands “Duty, Honor, Sacrifice, Service and Integrity” better than firefighters and the families and staff who support our mission. We have been called on by our communities and society at large to expand our service in the opioid, narcotic and psychoactive substance abuse scourge that is infecting our society.

We salute our colleagues, community organizations and substance abuse coalitions who deal with this scourge daily. While our first responders have been called upon to administer the opioid reversal agent Naloxone (Narcan) more than ever, this life-saving drug is not the cure for people suffering from substance use disorder. Our response must not only be to sustain lives, but then to assist people to find the resources that are required to treat the root cause of the disease. We must focus our efforts on prevention, education and the treatment of victims and their families who are struggling with substance use disorder.

In addition, enforcement is a key tactic in battling this epidemic. We urge our government and law enforcement community to leverage your resources in order to build partnerships of purposeful action and deliberate execution. The poison that infects our society—poppy and coca amongst the most lethal—is made available by heedless farmers, synthetic chemists, dealers, traffickers, terrorists, criminals, cartels, and distributors. Any action that helps break the chain of supply will provide more opportunities for people struggling with this disease more time for recovery. For the good of our society, families, neighbors, and communities, the time to stop this crisis is now. The International Association of Fire Chiefs calls for integrated action by all federal, state and local agencies.

We applaud legislators who write sensible laws which seek to regulate and provide oversight to drug companies and prescribers who, for too long, have overprescribed opioids to their patients. We support those providers who prescribe responsibly and find safe alternatives when treating their patients who are in pain. The facts, however, speak plainly: In 2017, there were 64,000 deaths in the United States caused by opioid overdose. The IAFC calls on you to aid the progress of those already “fighting the good fight” by:

- Implementing cohesive and outcome-driven negotiations.
- Lobbying for United Nations and international cooperatives, diplomatic initiatives and sanctions.
- Providing better access to treatment and rehabilitation programs.

- Pushing for severe sentencing for the conviction of dealers and suppliers.
- Supporting our military and Coast Guard interdiction efforts to cut off the supply of illegal drugs entering our country.

Our firm resolve is based on “boots on the ground” experience and the best available medical evidence. We are unwavering in our commitment and urge you to join us in taking the necessary steps to end this crisis now.

**Submitted by:** The New England Division (NEDIAFC)

**Adopted by IAFC Board of Directors:** 9 MAY 2018