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## **Bedlam Matchup Highlights National Opioid Abuse Crisis**

### **OU and OSU Will Wear Helmet Stickers to Raise Awareness of the Opioid Epidemic**

OKLAHOMA CITY—Before the Bedlam rivalry between Oklahoma State University (OSU) and the University of Oklahoma (OU) breaks out on the field before a national audience, the two schools are teaming up to draw attention to the state's opioid addiction crisis.

The teams have designed tandem football helmet stickers in their respective crimson and orange that read: STOP OPIOIDS to address the prescription drug addiction crisis. At the coin toss to start the game, OSU and OU team members will be joined on the field by a Sooner and Cowboy family impacted by the opioid crisis. The Craig and Gail Box and Bob and Vicki Howard families are honorary team captains for the game - as Oklahoma families leading the effort against opioid addiction.

"We are very appreciative of both schools and their commitment to addressing this issue," said Terri White, commissioner of the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. "This is an important topic for our state. Through targeted prevention and treatment initiatives, we can save lives.

"Additionally, I would like to say a very special thank you to the Box and Howard families for their willingness to be part of this effort and give of themselves to help others."

"Oklahoma State is proud to be teaming up with OU to bring attention to this crisis of epidemic proportions for our state and nation," said OSU President Burns Hargis.

"OSU's Center for Health Sciences is committing many resources toward research and outreach for education and recovery programs to fight opioid abuse and addiction."

"This is a unique opportunity for OU and OSU to make great gains against the opioid epidemic and its local and national impact," said OU President David L. Boren. "The university is proud that the OU Health Sciences Center trains the most comprehensive healthcare team of doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other professionals to address this epidemic across the state. OU Physicians provide research-based care in every adult

and children specialty with a focus on behavioral health and opioid addiction, enabling us to reach families throughout Oklahoma.”

Oklahoma has the tenth highest drug overdose death rate in the nation, and opioid abuse is the primary reason why. In fact, the state ranks as the highest for nonmedical use of prescription painkillers. Opioids are the most common drug involved in overdose deaths. Every week, 14 Oklahomans die because of a drug overdose and 8 of those deaths are due to opioids.

The STOP OPIOID addiction program includes five action steps:

1. Avoid opioids – according to the Centers for Disease Control, there are safer approaches that may be more effective for pain management. Ask your doctor for these alternatives.
2. Never share – sharing opioid medication is illegal and may be putting someone on a dangerous path.
3. Lock it up– keep pain medications locked away to prevent theft and child poisoning. Don't keep leftover pills – dispose of them safely at a local medication drop box.
4. Reach out – addiction is a disease that needs treatment. Talk to your kids about the dangers. Talk to friends who may be struggling. Talk to a loved one if you need help. Call 211 for help!
5. Carry the drug naloxone – if you or someone you know is taking opioids to reverse the deadly effects of narcotics and know the signs of an emergency overdose.

Another important tip, never mix opioids with alcohol or other medications such as benzos (Xanax). It is a deadly combination.

The OSU Center for Health Sciences in partnership with the Oklahoma Attorney General's office, the Oklahoma State Department of Mental Health Services and Substance Abuse, TSET and the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics will be holding an Addiction in Rural Oklahoma Summit from Nov. 7 – 9 in targeted rural cities to bring awareness to the opioid epidemic in Oklahoma. For more information about those events visit [www.healthsciences.okstate.edu/addiction](http://www.healthsciences.okstate.edu/addiction).

For more information about the opioid crisis in Oklahoma go to <http://takeasprescribed.org/>.