



Office of the Attorney General
Washington, D. C. 20530

March 1, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ACTING ADMINISTRATOR OF THE DRUG ENFORCEMENT
ADMINISTRATION

FROM: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL 

SUBJECT: AGGREGATE PRODUCTION QUOTA

Our nation is in the grips of the deadliest drug epidemic in our history. In accordance with President Donald J. Trump's declaration of a Public Health Emergency and his directive to his Administration to address drug addiction and opioid abuse, the Department of Justice has helped lead the fight against this devastating crisis. I appreciate the efforts of the great men and women of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), who are making significant strides in combatting this threat.

In recent months, the DEA has ramped up enforcement, regulatory, and prevention efforts. On October 27, 2017, the DEA announced six new heroin enforcement teams to enhance DEA's ability to combat trafficking in heroin, fentanyl, and fentanyl analogues and the violence associated with drug trafficking. On February 6, 2017, the DEA took the immediate and important action of scheduling all fentanyl-related substances on an emergency basis. Further, the DEA recently announced new efforts to educate its 1.7 million registrants. These are just a few of the many DEA initiatives that will help save lives.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, prescription opioids have played a significant role in this epidemic. With an estimated 64,000 Americans dying from drug overdoses in 2016 and a further increase in deaths likely in 2017—most as a result of opioids—the Department of Justice must use all tools at its disposal to prevent the over-prescription and diversion of opioid painkillers.

Studies have indicated that the United States is an outlier in the number of opioid prescriptions issued each year. Accordingly, I direct the DEA to evaluate and to consider whether or not to amend its regulations governing the aggregate production quota where appropriate as expeditiously as practicable, including through a potential interim final rule. These regulations set forth procedures for setting the production and manufacturing quotas on Schedule I and II controlled substances, including prescription opioids that are a large part of this crisis.

Time is of the essence. Given the urgency of this crisis, with an estimated 175 Americans dying per day, we need DEA to act quickly to determine if changes are needed in the quotas. Thank you for your outstanding leadership and for making the fight against the opioid epidemic your top priority as well as your cooperation with me and my staff on these matters.