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Governor Christie Creates Facing Addiction Task Force To Fight Drug Addiction Through Treatment And Prevention

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Tags: [Addiction Taskforce](#)

Pastor Joe A. Carter of New Hope Baptist Church To Chair Group of Leaders and Experts

Trenton, NJ - Governor Christie today signed Executive Order No. 163 to create the Facing Addiction Task Force, a 12-member team of leaders and experts from inside and outside of government to fight drug addiction through treatment and prevention. This team will help move forward Governor Christie's efforts to treat addiction as a disease that affects people of all ages, races, and walks of life. Led by Pastor Joe A. Carter of The New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, the taskforce will help develop a strategy to destigmatize, prevent and treat the disease of addiction with a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach.

The Governor made the announcement following a tour and roundtable discussion with clients and staff of the Catholic Charities' Project Free program, which provides services for approximately 60 women and their dependent children, including substance abuse and mental health treatment, individual and group counseling, as well as day care services to support those treatment efforts.

"Those suffering with addiction are often ashamed of their disease, leading to isolation from their families, communities, and friends and the access to help they need to treat and overcome their disease. In this fight, we must not only improve the services available to help addicted individuals reclaim their lives, but it is just as important that we bring down the invisible barriers to seeking out treatment - ending the stigma and recognize it can affect anyone," said Governor Christie. "I'm bringing together this group of experts, leaders, and individuals with first-hand experience from inside and outside of government to build on our efforts, and give recommendations on where we can strengthen our treatment services, prevention efforts, and strategies to end the stigma on this issue."

The Facing Addiction Task Force includes the following members and will be chaired by Pastor Joe Carter:

Pastor Joe A. Carter, Chair

Pastor Joe A. Carter is the pastor of The New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, NJ. In 1993, Pastor Carter was called to serve as the Assistant Pastor of the New Hope Baptist Church, a position he held until April 26, 1998, when he was installed as Co-Pastor. Pastor Carter became the Pastor of the New Hope Baptist Church on November 1, 2000. He was the youngest pastor in the church's 110-year history. In the 21 years Pastor Carter has been united with The New Hope Baptist Church, he has proven himself as one used by God to guide, provide, protect, and shepherd the spiritual lives of God's people. Under Pastor Carter's tutelage, he has worked tirelessly as an advocate for cohesive change within the community and religious sector by developing and organizing Christian Leaders for Community Empowerment (CLCE), a collaboration of area pastors who are concerned with the state of our communities.

Former Governor Jim McGreevey

Former governor of New Jersey, McGreevey now serves as Executive Director of the Jersey City Employment & Training Program, where he administers the city's employment program and is moving forward with a prisoner re-entry program. McGreevey ministers to drug-addicted female inmates seeking counseling and treatment at Integrity House, part of Hudson County Correctional Center.

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Ray Lucas, former New York Jets quarterback and Addiction Peer Counselor for the P.A.S.T Retired Athletes Medical Group

Ray Lucas is a studio analyst for the show Jets Nation on New York City-based sports network SportsNet New York. He played quarterback in the NFL for four teams, the New England Patriots, New York Jets, Miami Dolphins and Baltimore Ravens during his seven-year career from 1996 to 2002. He played college football at Rutgers University. Lucas has successfully overcome a serious pain killer addiction that was complicated by his post-concussion issues. At one point Ray Lucas was taking over 1,000 pain pills a month. He has been successfully treated by the P.A.S.T. retired. Players' Medical Program for many years. Lucas is now an addiction peer counselor for the P.A.S.T. Retired NFL Players Medical Group; he works with former athletes helping them to overcome the stigma of addiction and plays a vital role in their recovery process. Lucas has appeared on numerous TV programs such as HBO Real Sports, CBS Super Bowl Pre Game Show and was also the subject of the Emmy nominated series Causalities of the Gridiron. In each program he was featured speaking about his addiction in hopes of addressing the stigma attached to addiction and to encourage people who are suffering with addictions to seek help. In 2014, Lucas co-wrote the book "Under Pressure: How Playing Football Almost Cost Me Everything and Why'd I'd Do It All Again."

Larry Mihlon, West Long Branch Police Chief

Chief Larry Mihlon was born and raised in Little Silver and was a Police Explorer dispatcher and special officer. After receiving a degree in criminal justice from the University of Delaware, he served as a Ranger for the United States National Park Service. He has served the department as Detective, Sergeant, Lieutenant and Captain, and is the recipient of the Life-Saving Medal, Educational Achievement Bar, and the Exceptional Duty Bar. In 2013, his 22-year-old son overdosed on heroin.

Dr. Soumen Samaddar, Family Physician, Hunterdon Medical Center

Dr. Soumen Samaddar, MD is a board certified family physician in Washington, New Jersey. He graduated from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey - Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and completed his residency in family medicine at Hunterdon Medical Center. He is affiliated with Hunterdon Medical Center.

Evelyn Sullivan, Managing Director, Daytop

Evelyn Sullivan currently serves as a Managing Director of the Pittsgrove treatment facility of Daytop New Jersey, Inc., a comprehensive substance abuse treatment and education program. Sullivan has worked in many aspects of drug and alcohol prevention and treatment, including residential, outpatient, development, planning, supervision and training. Sullivan previously served as the Director of Substance Abuse Services at Preferred Behavioral Health of New Jersey for 15 years and as the Director of the Central Intake Unit for the Newark Target Cities project. Additionally, she has worked for the Elizabeth General Medical Center - Department of Psychiatry, the Monmouth County Department of Human Services and as a counselor in private practice for individuals and families. She earned her undergraduate degree from the City University of New York, and graduated with honors. Ms. Sullivan holds a Master's Degree in Social Work from Rutgers University. Sullivan is also a member of the NJ SAFE Task Force.

In addition to the public members, members of the Christie administration will also serve on the taskforce, including:

Department of Human Services Commissioner Jennifer Velez
 Department of Health Commissioner Mary O'Dowd
 Department of Children and Families Commissioner Allison Blake
 Attorney General John Hoffman
 Department of Corrections Commissioner Gary Lanigan
 State Parole Board Chairman James Plousis

The Facing Addiction Taskforce will be responsible for:

Developing additional strategies to reduce stigma associated with substance abuse and addiction;
 Reviewing the continuum of treatment services and developing recommendations for strengthening the treatment system;
 Developing additional prevention strategies and efforts in New Jersey;
 Advising the Governor on matters related to stigma, addiction and substance abuse.

Last week, the Governor hosted a summit and call to action that brought together public leaders, treatment professionals and advocates, and survivors of drug addiction with a focus on ending the stigma around drug addiction and treatment. The Christie Administration has continued those efforts to shine a light on the realities of addiction, including a social media campaign urging people to use the hashtag #BeAFace, share their stories of addiction and shine a light on the fact that addiction can happen to anyone regardless of age, race, gender, socio-economic status, or walk in life.

The Facing Addiction Task Force is the latest step in a years-long commitment by Governor Christie to change the way we deal with addiction treatment, drug abuse, overdose prevention, and addiction-fueled recidivism in New

Jersey. Those efforts include:

Mandatory Drug Court For Nonviolent, Drug-Addicted Offenders. In 2012, Governor Christie signed into law landmark, bipartisan legislation to put in place a statewide, mandatory drug court program. The legislation acted on the principles that no life is disposable and that it is a commonsense, fiscal, and moral imperative to help individuals dealing with drug addiction reclaim their lives with treatment, rather than warehousing them in prison.

Statewide Heroin Antidote Program To Train And Equip First Responders With Immediate, Lifesaving Response To Overdose. Governor Christie announced a statewide expansion of the successful pilot program that was launched in Ocean and Monmouth counties earlier this year to help reduce the number of heroin-related deaths by training and equipping police officers and first responders to administer the antidote Narcan to overdose victims.

Signed Bipartisan Overdose Protection Act Into Law. In May 2013, fulfilling his commitment to emphasize drug rehabilitation efforts and his different approach to dealing with drug abuse and addiction, Governor Christie signed the bipartisan Overdose Protection Act (P.L. 2013, c.46) into law at a drug rehabilitation center in Paterson. The Governor was joined at the bill signing by Jon Bon Jovi, leading drug prevention advocates and family members of individuals lost to drug overdoses.

The legislation takes a two-prong approach to help prevent drug overdose deaths in New Jersey. First, it provides legal protection to people who are in violation of the law while they are attempting to help a drug overdose victim. Secondly, it eliminates negative legal action against health care professionals or bystanders who administer overdose antidotes in life-threatening situations.

Supporting Successful Transition For Those Who Have Sought Out Treatment And Counseling Services From Inside Prison. In April 2014, Governor Christie signed legislation that allows drug treatment programs in state prison facilities and jails to be licensed, providing a bridge to other state services like job training and assistance programs for inmates who have received counseling and treatment to stay off drugs and away from crime once they're released.

Common-Sense Bail Reform To Bring Fairness For Non-Violent Offenders. Governor Christie signed bipartisan reforms to New Jersey's bail system that have been in the making for two and a half years. These reforms make the bail system fairer by allowing those who commit minor, nonviolent offenses to have nonmonetary options instead of being confined to jail because they simply cannot afford even low bail amounts.

Integrating Substance Abuse Treatment With Employment Services: Governor Christie is going further in helping those with drug addiction reclaim their lives in a permanent way, by taking the lead on an innovative initiative to integrate substance abuse treatment with employment services like job training, skills acquisition, and job-search and placement resources.

A PDF copy of Executive Order No. 163

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