

## Governor Christie: NJ Now Leads The Way With The Country's Strongest Reform On Opioid Prescriptions

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### Transcript:

**Governor Christie:** I'm pleased to have signed Senate Bill 3. That's also a good indicator that I knew it was going to pass, when they give it a low number it's pretty good. A bi-partisan measure which requires health insurance coverage for treatment of substance abuse disease as well as providing the country's strongest maximum limit of five days on initial opioid prescriptions, which often become a gateway to addiction and in fact, according to Pew, four out of five new heroin victims, new addicts to heroin start with prescription opioid drugs. Most states allow opioid prescriptions to last seven days or many states significantly longer, New Jersey will now lead the way in that regard. When a person who is in the throes of addiction as you know realizes he or she needs help, they should not be blocked at the treatment center doors with their life hanging in the balance, because their insurance carrier requires a pre-evaluation that could take weeks to complete. Now, with this legislation, people seeking treatment cannot be denied access in their time of need. The epidemic of addiction is incalculable, the numbers are indisputable, I went through them in the State of the State -- 22 percent between 2014-15 increase in drug overdose deaths with a 30 percent increase in heroin deaths over the previous year and triple the number of deaths caused by fentanyl; 1,600 lives lost in 2015 alone, that's four times the number of people who were murdered in New Jersey in 2015, and three times the number of people who died in an automobile accident. No one now under this legislation will be turned away from treatment for insurance reasons, if licensed provider prescribes substance abuse disorder treatment either

inpatient or outpatient. Insurance coverage for treatment of substance abuse disorder will be required and any waiting period that could derail a person's recovery is eliminated by this bill. People diagnosed with a substance abuse disease will have covered treatment for 180 days, starting the day they need it, including long-term out-patient treatment with no interference from their carrier, making New Jersey the only state in the nation in which people with insurance cannot be retroactively charged for six months of necessary addiction treatment. Covered medication-assisted treatments must be provided without the imposition of a prior approval from a carrier, this is incredibly important and we know that this medication-assisted treatment is the key for lots of folks to getting on the road to recovery and staying there. Onerous pre-payment obligations imposed by providers will be prohibited, and instead, patients will only be required to pay their normal copayment, their normal deductible or their normal co-insurance, not an increased one for this specialized type of treatment. Treatment for substance abuse disorders must be covered by the carrier to the same extent as any other covered medical condition. The Office of Attorney General is tasked with monitoring this system to prevent waste, fraud or abuse, and to ensure providers are not improperly treating patients or filling beds that could be used by those who are truly in need of treatment. A five-day limit on initial opioid prescriptions will be imposed, lowered from 30 days, which is the current law and most of you know that most physicians write 30 days automatically, no longer. Five-days is now the initial that they can write it for. This is not going to impact cancer and hospice patients or residents of long-term care facilities, that was carefully opted out of the bill by the legislature with my consent. In addition, a requirement that physicians inform patients about the potential dangers of opioid use before issuing the prescription is now law in the State of New Jersey. And ensuring that physicians who prescribe opioids take continuing education courses on the issue as part of their licensure requirements.

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