

# Governor Christie Marks "Season of Service," Visits Neonatal ICU Treating Drug-Exposed Newborns

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*Helping the State's Most Vulnerable Population by "Giving the Gift of Support"*

**Trenton, NJ** - Governor Chris Christie today toured the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Jersey Shore University Medical Center, visiting five infants facing the threat of perinatal addiction after being born to mothers with substance abuse problems.

The tour, part of the Governor's annual "Season of Service" campaign, expanded on Governor Christie's efforts to fight drug addiction, stem opioid abuse and save lives. The newborns he visited are among hundreds annually in New Jersey who come into the world after being exposed prenatally to their mother's substance abuse and, in many cases, experiencing withdrawal symptoms.

"We must never forget the innocent victims of drug addiction – the babies born to those on drugs, some extremely premature and delivered with a whole host of medical challenges as they come into the world," said Governor Christie. "Seeing addictions passed on from mothers to children only hardens my resolve to do all I can to prevent substance abuse and get help for those already addicted."

"The rise of the drug epidemic in our society affects even the most innocent individuals when infants are born with substance exposure," said Kenneth N. Sable, M.D., MBA, FACEP, president of Jersey Shore University Medical Center and K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital, part of Hackensack Meridian Health. "Through community partnerships, education and access to community resources, we can bring attention to this sad reality and reinforce the importance of treating perinatal addiction."

New Jersey hospitals handle an average of 500 neonatal drug withdrawal cases annually, according to hospital discharge data compiled by the state Department of Health on neonatal abstinence syndrome, which is associated with women taking opioids during pregnancy.

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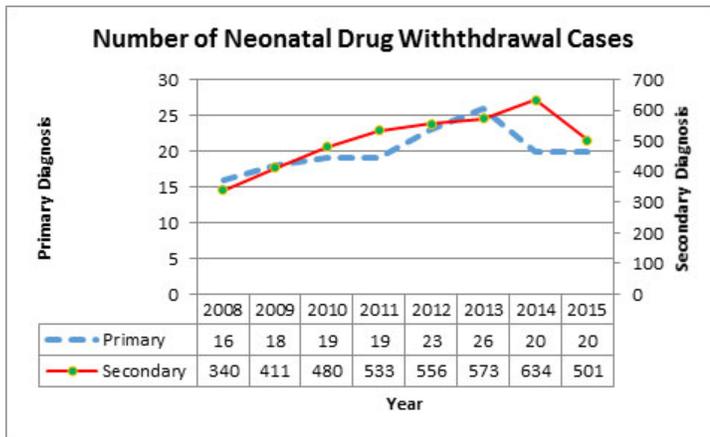
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Jersey Shore’s NICU provides one of the highest levels of care in Monmouth/Ocean counties to critically-ill newborns and those at risk of complications after birth. It is one of the few state-designated Level III nurseries specializing in the care of high-risk newborns and it is staffed by specialized maternity nurses who work in close collaboration with the pediatric house staff and the OB-GYN house staff.

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