

## ICYMI: In Praise Of Gov. Christie's Opioid Initiatives

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*In Case You Missed It*  
**In Praise Of Gov. Christie's Opioid Initiatives**  
 - Debra L. Wentz

### In praise of Gov. Christie's opioid initiatives

Debra L. Wentz, CEO and president, New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies  
 ROI NJ

The New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, which represents 160 of the state's community-based mental health and addiction providers, loudly applauds Gov. Chris Christie on the unprecedented and wide-reaching investment of roughly \$200 million to tackle the opioid epidemic.

Gov. Christie announced the details of his plan yesterday at NJAMHAA member agency Integrity House, a leader in the provision of addiction treatment and recovery support services.

In his remarks, Gov. Christie noted that the nationwide toll of the opioid epidemic is akin to the Sept. 11, 2001, loss of life happening every three weeks. With the highest number of lives lost to addiction in New Jersey recorded in 2016 — more than 2,000 — the governor's continued efforts to battle this epidemic are desperately needed and greatly appreciated.

The funding will support 25 initiatives, to be implemented by eight state departments, that provide prevention, treatment and recovery support targeted for various populations affected by opioid addiction. These initiatives are in addition to existing programs.

The 25 initiatives represent the state's commitment to reach out to more demographic groups and expand access to recovery. The funding for these initiatives will not lead to tax increases or cuts in other vital government services.

The diverse range of the initiatives will help New Jersey continue to distinguish itself as a national leader in access to addiction prevention, treatment and recovery.

One pilot program will reward inpatient treatment providers' positive outcomes in enabling their low-income adult clients to succeed by remaining in treatment and securing employment. A variety of residential, educational and other recovery and prevention services for pregnant women, new mothers and substance-exposed babies will support young women and their families. Expansion of supportive housing for adults and families affected by substance use disorders will bring services to help people sustain productive lives and keep families intact. The increase in recovery coaches will help more individuals treated in emergency rooms following naloxone overdose reversals engage with treatment programs. Designated housing on college campuses will enable recovering New Jersey students to complete their education in safe, substance-free environments.

Every day, NJAMHAA members are on the front lines of the battle against addiction. Every year, our members transform the lives of thousands of men, women and children from communities in every county across the state. We are grateful that Gov. Christie is once again investing in addiction treatment and recovery, building on other investments and campaigns from recent years, including his outstanding work to eliminate stigma.

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While the future of federal health care legislation and Medicaid continues to be uncertain, the opioid crisis is unrelenting in its assault on communities in our state. Gov. Christie summarized our call to action: "Our obligation isn't to save everyone. Our obligation is to try."

His administration's commitment to helping New Jersey residents who struggle with addiction find recovery is a bold, far-reaching attempt, which NJAMHAA wholeheartedly endorses, and which NJAMHAA's members will implement. Now, more than ever, is the time for decisive action.

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