

Governor Christie Signs Life-Saving Drug Addiction Reform, Ensuring Immediate Covered Treatment

Wednesday, February 15, 2017 Tags: [Addiction Taskforce](#)



Trenton, NJ – Governor Chris Christie signed into law today his life-saving healthcare reform to guarantee insurance coverage for people to access immediate drug addiction treatment and to limit initial opioid prescriptions. Governor Christie announced America’s strongest addiction recovery reform during his 2017 State of the State address, and it was passed in a month by the legislature.

“Everyone in New Jersey is impacted by America’s growing drug addiction crisis, and so I am proud bipartisan legislative leaders expedited the passage of this life-saving healthcare reform that will serve as a national model,” Governor Christie said. “Lives will no longer be put at risk by layers of needless bureaucracy or due to an overabundance of prescribed opioid pills that get into the hands of children and the vulnerable. This is no doubt the strongest law in the country that will provide critical prevention and treatment measures to combat the rampant, deadly disease of addiction.”

This new law, S-3/A-3, makes New Jersey the only state in which people with insurance are guaranteed coverage and cannot be retroactively charged for six months of necessary addiction treatment, and it establishes in New Jersey the country’s strongest maximum limit of five days’ worth of prescribed opioid pills to keep them out of the hands of children and the vulnerable.

This new law ensures:

- No one will be turned away from treatment for insurance reasons, if a licensed provider prescribes substance abuse disorder treatment;
- Insurance coverage for treatment of a substance abuse disorder will be required and any waiting period that could derail a person’s recovery will be eliminated;
- People diagnosed with a substance abuse disorder 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;
- Covered medication-assisted treatments must be provided without the imposition of prior approval from a carrier;
- Onerous pre-payment obligations imposed by providers will be prohibited, and instead, patients will only be required to pay their copayment, deductible or co-insurance for their treatment;
- Treatment for substance abuse disorders must be covered by the carrier to the same extent as any other covered medical condition without increased copayments, deductibles or co-insurance;
- The Office of Attorney General will be 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 others in need of treatment; and
- A five-day limit on initial opioid prescriptions, lowered from 30 days, to avoid deadly and habit-forming gateway drugs from getting into the hands of children and the vulnerable.

Earlier this month, Governor Christie signed legislation to help fulfill another anti-addiction reform announced in his 2017 State of the State that will raise awareness and education to prevent deadly opioid issues from impacting children and teenagers.

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[Governor’s Statement Upon Signing Assembly Bill No. 333 \[pdf 30KB\]](#)

The Governor encourages people to call 844-ReachNJ or visit www.reachnj.gov for instant, 24-hour per day, cost-free drug addiction related help for themselves and others. That website also lists a comprehensive menu of Governor Christie's pending and enacted life-saving prevention, treatment and recovery reforms.

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