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## Governor Christie Announces Funding To Raise Awareness Of The Dangers Of Overprescribing Painkillers To Young Athletes

Thursday, November 30, 2017 Tags: [Addiction Taskforce](#)



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**Trenton** – Governor Chris Christie today announced the awarding of \$670,700 in contracts to regional addiction prevention coalitions throughout the state to raise awareness about the overprescribing of opioid pain relievers to young adults, particularly young athletes.

The total annual funding for the project is \$407,350 for the first year, and \$263,350 for years two through four.

"I have seen too many young people, especially young athletes, whose lives began a downward spiral into addiction, and often death, soon after being treated for a legitimate injury," Governor Chris Christie said. "Painkillers are often overprescribed and then stopped abruptly, leaving people with a dependency they can't break. Research shows three in four high school heroin users started with prescription opioids, and we have to do everything we can to stop it."

The Department of Health recently issued a request for letters of interest from the 17 regional prevention coalitions established by Governor Christie in 2012. Some of the coalitions address the addiction issues in more than one county, so all 21 counties are served by them.

Each coalition receiving the funding will each receive \$19,400 for the first year and \$12,540 for the subsequent years.

The coalitions, funded by the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), will partner in its "NJAssessRx" project funded by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The program is designed to raise awareness about the dangers of sharing medications and to work with pharmaceutical and medical communities to educate them on the risks of overprescribing to young athletes. The project also aims to raise community awareness and bring prescription drug abuse prevention activities and educational programs to schools, communities, parents, prescribers, and their patients.

In addition, SAMHSA will track reductions in opioid overdoses and the incorporation of Prescription Drug Monitoring Program data into needs assessments and strategic plans as indicators of the program's success.

Overdose deaths in the United States Overdose deaths nearly quadrupled from 2000 to 2014, from 8,407 to 33,091 annually, and in New Jersey, in 2015, the death rate from opioid overdoses was 18.1 per 100,000 people, or 1,587 deaths, according to the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General.

Effective January 1, 2012, the 17 regional substance abuse prevention coalitions were funded by DMHAS with \$3.65 million in grants from the SAMHSA.

The goal of the coalitions is to engage community stakeholders to address prevention priorities aimed: reducing the use of illegal substances – especially opioids – among young adults between the ages of 18 and 25, reducing underage drinking, and reducing prescription medication misuse.

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### Transcript:

**Governor Christie:** The President has made this a priority but would not have happened without Seema deciding to step up and really push the folks at CMS to get this waiver done. New Jersey is one of the first states to get it. I can promise her we will utilize it, and we'll utilize it in a way that's responsible, making sure that organizations that are

funded are effective, holding them accountable for the results that they produce for their clients and also for the taxpayers, both at the federal and state level who are helping to fund this treatment. I think if we do that together in a way that insures accountability and better results that people will look back on her decision to grant this waiver is one that saved lives in the state. I can't thank Administrator Verma enough for her partnership with us on this issue, and her leadership in the federal government on bringing innovation and new ideas to dealing with the epidemic that we're going through across this country that last year cost us 64,000 American lives. So, Administrator Verma, welcome to New Jersey, thank you.

**Administrator Seema Verma:** Thank you, good morning, and thank you to Governor Christie for hosting today. I appreciate just the tour and everything, so thank you. I think every day we're hearing about the opioid epidemic, people dying, how much money it's costing the system. I'm actually a mother of two kids and this is a personal issue for me. My daughter is a senior in high school now but when she was in eighth grade, we attended a funeral for a classmate in her class, it was her older brother. And I will never forget that funeral. Listening to a 13-year-old girl talk about her brother and how angry she was at her brother for getting involved in drugs and the pain that she showed in terms of the devastation that she will never see her brother again. And that is something that has always stayed with me. As a mom there are many things you're concerned about. You know, there's broken bones and grades and all kinds of things. But this is something that really concerns me as a parent. And this is actually going to increase treatment, not only in New Jersey but hopefully the rest of the nation. It's actually going to allow people that are on Medicaid to access new treatment services, and we hope that facilities will actually build more services and increase their beds available for folks on Medicaid. Again, it's a pleasure to be here today. I really appreciate the hospitality from the folks at New Jersey and again, just can't say enough about the Governor's leadership on this issue, and you know, again, we met with a lot of folks today that are dealing with addiction and there's just a lot of great role models here. So appreciate everybody's work on the front lines.

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