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## Gov. Christie On Addiction: We're Saving People, But We're Not Saving Nearly Enough

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### Transcript:

**Governor Christie:** My mother was an addict. She was addicted to nicotine and she started smoking when she was 16 years old and she, despite all different kinds of efforts, smoked until she died at 71, predictably, of lung cancer. Now, my mother knew from about 1964 on, she was in her early thirties then, that smoking was real bad for her and in fact, could wind up killing her. And despite efforts that she made over the course of time, very sporadically, she could never kick the disease and it wound up killing her. When she got diagnosed with lung cancer we didn't hesitate to tell our friends that my mother had lung cancer. We weren't ashamed of it despite the fact that she caused it. We knew she caused it. She knew she caused it. We weren't ashamed to tell people. And people didn't come back to us and kind of look at us and say, well, you know, don't give her any treatment, she's getting what she deserves. They said - 'What hospital are you taking her to? What kind of treatment is she getting? What's her prognosis? We'll pray for her.' My mother was an addict in the same way that someone who is addicted to heroin or other opioids, cocaine or alcohol, is an addict. Yet I think if I had told people back then that my mother was addicted to heroin, that she was in the hospital because she was addicted to heroin, I would've gotten a much different reaction than the reaction I got. We need to move society's reaction to this problem much closer to the way they reacted to my mother, in my opinion, than the way they react in the main today. And we do that then, no one is afraid to go to Sloan Kettering or MD Anderson or any of the other great cancer centers of the world to admit they are sick and they need help and they are looking for help. We need to make it coming to a place like this, which is the oldest and, you know, one of the greatest centers for dealing

with mental health issues and addiction issues in the state, we need people to walk through these doors with the same sense that they're here to be helped and not be ashamed. If we do that we can help break down a lot of these barriers and lead to greater and more effective treatment. And listen, what that does in the end is it creates, recreates really, better mothers and fathers, better sons and daughters, better brothers and sisters, and better citizens for our state who become productive again in every way, not just economically, but contribute to society and to their neighborhoods and their communities in ways that they had done prior to their addiction. So that's what I'm shooting for, it's not just changes that we can make substantively, we talked about some when we met before, others we can do to be helpful, but it's a much bigger issue it's a stigma issue that we have to get by because if we don't then we'll continue, save lots of people, but we're not saving nearly enough. So that's why I'm here and why I'm going to continue to talk about this issue. I got involved in the addiction issue in a significant way now almost 23 years ago by becoming a board member at DayTop Village in Mendham for adolescents who have drug treatment, drug addiction issues and it opened my eyes to this issue in a way that they haven't been closed since.

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