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Governor Christie Visits Monmouth Medical Center's Recovery Coaches Program for Overdose Survivors

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Tags: [Addiction Taskforce](#)

Increased Treatment Outcomes Saving Lives

Trenton, NJ – Highlighting the importance of increased intervention options to help overdose victims get the treatment needed for a path to recovery, Governor Chris Christie today visited with recovery coaches and consumers of Monmouth Medical Center's Recovery Coaches program. The initiative is a direct result of the work of the Governor's Facing Addiction Task Force, which identified this critical period following an overdose as a missed opportunity to intervene and provide treatment and assistance to individuals who suffer a drug overdose.

"We have saved thousands of lives with naloxone," said Governor Christie. "However, as the people I just met with stressed, reversal of an overdose alone does not mean recovery. Many patients who walk out of the ER after reversal often use again within hours or even minutes after being discharged. That's why it's important that we not miss opportunities to get people into treatment, and that's what this program is doing to save lives."

The Opioid Overdose Recovery Program ("Recovery Coaches") is a program funded through the Department of Human Services' Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (GCADA). The initiative utilizes Recovery Coaches and Patient Navigators, many of whom are in long-term addiction recovery, to engage individuals reversed from an opioid overdose, providing non-clinical assistance, recovery support, appropriate referrals for assessment and treatment, and recovery follow-up.

DMHAS, GCADA and DCF are providing total annualized funding of \$1,023,000 for services to be provided over two years in four hard hit areas. Contracts in the amount of \$255,750 each were awarded in Camden, Essex, Monmouth, Ocean, and Passaic Counties to Center for Family Services, Turning Point, Barnabas Health Institute for Prevention, and Eva's Village, respectively. With the expansion in December into Eva's Village in Passaic, the Governor has committed a total of \$1.3 million to the program.

"The goal of the Barnabas Health Opioid Overdose Recovery Program is to get individuals who were reversed from an opioid overdose into detox so they can begin a process of recovery through an established support system," says Connie Greene, Vice President of the Barnabas Health Institute for Prevention. "Our Recovery Coaches and Patient Navigator work with each individual to develop a life plan to help get them the treatment they need, while addressing their fundamental needs. It's important for these patients to know they're not alone. We hold their hand during and after treatment. We understand that treatment and recovery are two different things and we offer support to help patients and their families get through this journey."

Governor Christie's Fiscal Year 2017 budget includes an allocation of \$1.7 million to expand the program into six more counties, for a total of 11 counties and \$3 million. Each county program is expected to serve 300 people annually. Although the program is in its early stages, more than 75 people whose overdose was reversed have already received the specialists' services.

"Just because you're lucky enough that someone around you had naloxone and saved your life doesn't mean you automatically have the tools and support to keep yourself alive and get out of heroin's grip," Department of Human Services Acting Commissioner Elizabeth Connolly said, applauding the governor for his continued commitment to fighting drug addiction. "This program provides immediate intervention as well as people to guide you on your road to recovery."

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The Recovery Coaches and Patient Navigators also will maintain regular follow-up with these individuals and also are often on call for them.

Recovery Coaches are defined as individuals who have a minimum of two years of experience in the guiding principles of recovery, and Patient Navigators as individuals who have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in the behavioral health profession plus a minimum of three years' experience working with individuals with a substance use and mental health disorder.

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