



# Governor Murphy Signs Illicit Opioid Supply Substance Poisoning Awareness Act

Posted on - 01/17/2026

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed bipartisan legislation, known as the Illicit Opioid Supply Substances Poisoning Awareness Act, which requires school districts to provide instruction to students in grades 6-12 on the dangers of substances that are the most prevalent or emerging in the illicit opioid supply in New Jersey.

"Educating young people about the dangers of illicit opioids is a critical public health responsibility. Clear, honest information saves lives by helping students recognize risks and reduce harmful exposures," **said Governor Murphy**. "By directing our public schools to integrate age-appropriate instruction on illegal drugs, we are equipping our children with the tools necessary to make informed decisions. The opioid crisis is real and has had a devastating impact on countless families in our state and across the country. I am thankful to Patrice for her advocacy to advance this commonsense measure in honor of her son, Max. Her leadership on this issue is truly inspirational."

"Too many families have already experienced the unimaginable heartbreak of losing a child to the opioid epidemic. Prevention through education must remain a cornerstone of our response to this crisis, because talking to our kids about the dangers of opioids isn't optional – it's part of protecting them," **said First Lady Tammy Murphy**. "Today's bill signing would not be possible without the tireless advocacy of Patrice Lenowitz, who turned her grief into activism. I applaud Patrice's dedication to honoring her son Max through this legislation and giving children across the state the resources they need to protect their health and well-being."

"The way we've been talking to our kids about drugs no longer reflects the reality they are facing," **said Patrice Lenowitz, a Woodcliff Lake resident who advocated for the creation of this legislation after her son, Max, died of fentanyl poisoning**. "Every life lost is a child's future erased and a family's story rewritten in agony. Primary prevention education is how we fight back—and how we win—by keeping our children informed, safe, and alive. I am deeply grateful for the bipartisan support behind Max's Law, and especially to Governor Phil Murphy and First Lady Tammy Murphy, who have stood by my family from the very beginning. Their leadership honored my son's life and carried us forward with compassion, dignity, and action."

Under the bill, school districts will be required to include this instruction to students in grades 6-12 as part of the implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education. Instruction should include the dangers of synthetic opioids, common non-opioids added to the opioid supply as adulterants, and counterfeit drugs.

The Commissioner of Education will be required to provide school districts with existing age-appropriate resources compiled by the Commissioner of Health. The information is required to utilize information and resources provided by the National Institutes of Health, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the New Jersey Department of Human Services, among other organizations.

As part of the State's commitment to save lives from preventable overdoses, the bill requires sharing of information about where naloxone can be found in schools and in communities. Under the Murphy Administration's

[Naloxone365 Program](#)

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, life-saving naloxone is available at 675 participating pharmacies statewide. In August 2018, Governor Murphy enacted the

[requirement](#)

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that each district board of education, board of trustees of a charter school, and chief school administrator of a nonpublic school serving any of the grades nine through 12, must develop and adopt policies and procedures to maintain and administer an opioid antidote to any student, school personnel, or other person believed to be experiencing an opioid overdose during regular school hours or during on-site school-sponsored events. All New Jersey school districts can obtain naloxone at no cost through the Department of Human Service's

[Naloxone DIRECT program](#)

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Overdose deaths

[continue to markedly decline in New Jersey](#)

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. In 2024, the most recent year for which final data is available, there were 2,020 fatal overdoses among NJ residents, which represents a 28% decrease from 2023 and a decline of 36% from a peak of 3,174 in 2022. Preliminary data from the first half of 2025 shows this trend continuing, with substantial declines from the previous year.

"Schools play a unique and vital role in supporting students' learning and well-being and the Illicit Opioid Supply Substances Poisoning Awareness Act strengthens our ability to ensure students receive age-appropriate instruction on the dangers, recognition, and treatment of illicit opioid abuse and poisoning," **said Education Commissioner Kevin Dehmer**. This legislation brings these important issues to the forefront and provides schools with another important tool to help students make informed decisions and stay safe."

"Fact-based information about illicit opioid substances – and how to save a life in an emergency situation without fear of punishment – will empower



our children with the tools needed to keep themselves and their friends safe," said **Acting Health Commissioner Jeff Brown**. "This law is another step forward in addressing the dangers of substance use that have claimed far too many lives."

"Learning early about the dangers posed by today's illicit drug supply gives young people and the adults who support them clear, accurate, and potentially life-saving information," said **Human Services Commissioner Sarah Adelman**. "By integrating opioid poisoning prevention, naloxone awareness, and emergency response into health education, New Jersey is taking a step to prevent tragedies, connect students to help, and ensure families and schools have the tools they need to keep communities safe."

Sponsors of the legislation (

[A3909/S2818](#)

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) include Senators Holly Schepisi and Vin Gopal, along with Assembly Members John Azzariti and Anthony Verrelli.

"This legislation is an important step in the fight against the epidemic of fentanyl poisoning in New Jersey. I was honored to introduce the 'Illicit Opioid Supply Substances Poisoning Awareness Act' in memory of Max Lenowitz of Woodcliff Lake—a beloved son, brother, and friend—and the tens of thousands of other New Jersey residents who have lost their lives to fentanyl or xylazine poisoning," said **Senator Holly Schepisi**. "I'm grateful to Max's mother Patrice for championing the creation of this legislation and for my colleagues in the Legislature and the Governor who worked in a bipartisan manner to get this very important legislation across the finish line. Far too many young Americans, like Max, have had their lives cut short due to fentanyl or xylazine poisoning, and with Governor Murphy's signature, today we ensure this lifesaving prevention education reaches every student across our state."

"The opioid crisis continues to take lives across New Jersey, and too often young people are unaware of how dangerous illegal substances can be," said **Senator Vin Gopal**. "This legislation ensures students receive age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction about the risks of opioids and poisoning, giving them the information they need to make informed decisions and protect their health. Education is one of our strongest tools in preventing overdose and saving lives."

"I introduced this bill in honor of Max Lenowitz from Westwood who died of fentanyl poisoning in 2022 on his 25th birthday after being given a pill he was told was a Xanax and was laced with fentanyl. Max's mother, Patrice Lenowitz, has dedicated her time since Max's passing tirelessly advocating for this bill that will save lives," said **Assemblyman John Azzariti**. "Max will live on forever in the hearts of his family, friends, and our community and in the lives of those saved by this bill."

"Today, we are taking action to save lives with a piece of legislation called Max's Law," said **Assemblyman Anthony S. Verrelli**. "This law will make sure every middle and high school student in New Jersey learns the real dangers of drugs like fentanyl and xylazine. They'll be taught how to spot an overdose, what to do in an emergency, and the laws that protect them if they call for help. This education is our best tool to fight this crisis. In memory of Max Lenowitz and all those we have lost, this law is about hope. It's about giving our kids the knowledge they need to stay safe and build a healthier future for themselves and our state."

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