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## Facing Addiction Task Force One Year Later: Taking On Addiction Through Access To Treatment

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Tags: [Addiction Taskforce](#)

### FACING ADDICTION TASK FORCE ONE YEAR LATER: *Taking On Addiction Through Access To Treatment*

Over the past year, the Facing Addiction Task Force, a 12-member team of leaders and experts from the government, community and drug addiction treatment industry, have worked to fight addiction through treatment and prevention. The Task Force, chaired by Pastor Joe A. Carter of Newark's New Hope Baptist Church and former Governor Jim McGreevey was created by Governor Christie following the successful "The Many Faces of Addiction: Ending The Stigma" Summit. The event acted as a call to action and conversation – bringing together public leaders, treatment professionals, advocates, and survivors of drug addiction – focused on ending the stigma around drug addiction and treatment.

The Facing Addiction Task Force has served as the catalyst for the development of reforms and provided critical input for the implementation of treatment-related initiatives, providing feedback and advice from their meetings with community advocates and government officials.

#### Connecting Individuals With Recovery Coaches Following an Overdose:

As a direct result of the Task Force's work, the Governor today announced the launch of the "Recovery Coaches" program to reach and connect drug overdose survivors with treatment, counseling, and support services in the immediate aftermath of their overdose – a critical moment for successful intervention.

In June 2015 the NJ Department of Human Services (DHS) began the contracting process to develop an Opioid Overdose Recovery Program to put Recovery Coaches and Patient Navigators on the ground in hospitals to respond to individuals reversed from opioid overdoses and treated at hospital emergency departments as a result of the reversal. This program will utilize these Recovery Coaches to engage individuals reversed from an opioid overdose to provide non-clinical assistance, recovery supports and appropriate referrals for assessment and substance use disorder treatment. This program puts support immediately in reach for victims at hospitals to reach overdose victims immediately after they are stabilized.

Programs will be funded in areas of the state most impacted by addiction and overdose, including Camden, Essex, Monmouth and Ocean counties going forward.

#### One-Stop Access To Help Ex-Offenders Battling Drug Addiction:

In his 2015 State of the State Address, Governor Christie announced the first initiative to be implemented under the Task Force's guidance: A groundbreaking one-stop model for connecting comprehensive services to ex-offenders re-entering society. Based on the principle of Integrated Reintegration, the Governor announced a program designed to streamline services available to ex-offenders to ensure they receive the kind of support they need to reclaim their lives and eventually move off government safety net programs and into the workplace.

Through the program, The Reentry Corporation has worked to refer to or provide services to reentry clients including sober housing, substance use disorder treatment, employment services, help with an ID or driver's license, pro bono legal representation, and access to wrap-around social service programs such as Medicaid and food stamps.

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- The New Jersey Reentry Corporation was formed with initial funding from the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA), and was then provided operational funding for Jersey City, Newark, Paterson and Toms River. New sites are expected late this year/early 2016 in Newark, Paterson and Toms River.

#### **Providing a Comprehensive Referral Source for Addiction Services:**

Governor Christie announced the formation of an Interim Management Entity for addiction treatment in January 2015. This program advances the Governor's efforts to take a smarter and more effective approach in how the State supports individuals with substance use disorders. The Fiscal Year 2016 budget provides **\$2.3 million** to create a single point of entry for individuals in crisis and their families.

- By moving away from fragmented treatment options, this newly-funded entity has improved the way the State delivers services to people with substance use disorders. Through this new management contract with Rutgers' University Behavioral Health Care, individuals who are uninsured or on Medicaid with addiction disorders are able to more effectively access available services and resources throughout the State.
- The program launched on July 1 and has already received over 12,000 calls from New Jerseyans looking to improve their lives through treatment and recovery.

#### **Establishing An Opioid Overdose Prevention Program To Expand The Success Of Narcan:**

Building on Governor Christie's statewide expansion of the Narcan antidote program, the DHS Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services has laid the groundwork for the Opioid Overdose Prevention Program. This new program will provide education to those at risk of an overdose, as well as their friends and family, and will train individuals to recognize an opiate overdose and to subsequently provide life-saving rescue measures using Narcan to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

- The Christie Administration has issued a waiver to more than 28,000 certified EMTs to allow them to administer Narcan, a medication used to treat drug overdose patients in emergency situations statewide.
- Since April 2014, more than 1,700 deployments of Narcan have helped lead to the first decline in overdose deaths in New Jersey in the last four years.

#### **Building On The Governor's Record Of Putting Treatment First**

Since the start of his administration, Governor Christie has placed a spotlight on changing the conversation on drug addiction and focusing on treatment for those struggling with addiction. In his efforts to make treatment more accessible and focus on removing the stigma surrounding the disease of addiction, the Governor has worked with local community leaders, drug rehabilitation centers and legislators from both sides of the aisle to achieve these goals.

#### **A Statewide Expansion Of Drug Court:**

Governor Christie has followed through on his commitment to take a smarter and more effective approach focused on treating drug-addicted offenders by signing into law landmark, bipartisan legislation to put in place a state-wide, mandatory drug court program. The legislation acts on Governor Christie's belief that no life is disposable and that it is a commonsense and moral imperative to help individuals dealing with drug addiction reclaim their lives with treatment, rather than warehousing them in prison.

- Governor Christie is further acting on his commitment by increasing funding by **\$8.5 million** for drug court expansion and treatment in the Fiscal Year 2016 budget.

#### **Integrating Substance Abuse Treatment With Employment Services:**

Governor Christie is going further in helping those with drug addiction reclaim their lives in a permanent way, by taking the lead on an innovative initiative to integrate substance abuse treatment with employment services like job training, skills acquisition, and job-search and placement resources. Altogether, the Christie Administration and partners are devoting up to **\$1 million** towards these integrated employment services.

#### **Expansion of Prescription Monitoring Program (NJMPMP) to Include Interstate Data-Sharing:**

In October 2014, Governor Christie announced that the New Jersey Prescription Monitoring Program (NJMPMP) expanded its interstate data-sharing capabilities to connect with the State of Delaware's Prescription Monitoring Program.

Governor Christie signed bipartisan legislation in July that will broaden the use of the NJMPMP by doctors and pharmacists, and implement new methods for preventing "doctor shopping" that occurs with prescription and opioid abuse. The legislation expands New Jersey healthcare professionals' access to the NJMPMP by, among other things, requiring that prescribers and pharmacists register for NJMPMP access, and requiring that physicians consult the NJMPMP under limited circumstances.

Relatedly, in April 2015, Governor Christie signed legislation expanding the widely successful Project Medicine Drop initiative. The legislation codifies the Department of Law & Public Safety's (L&PS) existing Project Medicine Drop program, and provides for continued expansion of the program in the future.

#### **Establishing College & University Substance Abuse Recovery Housing Programs:**

In August 2015, Governor Christie signed legislation requiring certain four-year public colleges and universities to establish a supportive substance abuse recovery housing program within four years. The college may designate an

entire dormitory building, or an area within a dormitory such as a floor or wing. The legislation applies to those colleges in which at least a quarter of undergraduate students live in on-campus housing. The Rutgers New Brunswick campus already has implemented a similar policy. Additionally, in December, the College of New Jersey received grant funding to establish a recovery housing program.

#### ***SAVING THE LIVES OF OVERDOSE VICTIMS***

##### **Signing Bipartisan Overdose Protection Act Into Law:**

In May 2013, fulfilling his commitment to emphasize drug rehabilitation efforts and his different approach to dealing with drug abuse and addiction, Governor Chris Christie signed the bipartisan Overdose Protection Act into law at a drug rehabilitation center in Paterson (P.L. 2013, c. 46.).

- The legislation takes a two-prong approach to help prevent drug overdose deaths in New Jersey. First, it provides legal protection to people who are in violation of the law while they are attempting to help a drug overdose victim. Secondly, it eliminates negative legal action against health care professionals or bystanders who administer overdose antidotes in life-threatening situations.

In February 2015, Governor Christie signed an expansion of the Overdose Prevention Act, adding a provision providing immunity to first responders including police and EMTs who administer and dispense Narcan.

#### ***HELPING NON-VIOLENT OFFENDERS RECLAIM THEIR LIVES***

##### **Common-Sense Bail Reform To Bring Fairness For Non-Violent Offenders:**

Governor Christie signed bipartisan reforms to New Jersey's bail system that have been in the making for two and a half years. These reforms, along with an amendment to the State constitution approved by New Jersey voters on the November 2014 ballot, will keep dangerous individuals off the streets by allowing people charged with the most serious violent crimes to be held without bail.

##### **Helping Inmates Reclaim Their Lives By Attending College:**

Building on New Jersey's long record of innovative approaches to combating recidivism and Governor Christie's firm commitment to helping non-violent offenders reclaim their lives, a consortium of public and private universities across New Jersey are helping prison inmates attend college. Led by Rutgers University, the New Jersey Scholarship and Transformative Education in Prisons Consortium (NJ-STEP) is providing access to college for qualified incarcerated students, while assisting in the transition to college life upon their release into the community.

**Press Contact:**  
Brian Murray  
Nicole Sizemore  
609-777-2600



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Office of the Governor  
PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
609-292-6000