

Governor Christie Announces Counterfeit Fentanyl Ban and Expanded Recovery Coach Program

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New Jersey Combats Opioid Abuse with New Initiatives During National Recovery Month

Trenton, NJ – Expanding his commitment in the fight against opioid addiction in the Garden State, Governor Chris Christie today announced new initiatives in recognition of National Recovery Month, including an Emergency Order to ban the manufacture, distribution, sale, and possession of seven illegal knock-offs of the highly addictive opioid “fentanyl” and an expansion of the state’s Recovery Coach Program.

“We are doubling down on our efforts to combat the epidemic of opioid addiction – a pervasive crisis in communities and neighborhoods throughout our nation. This past summer, I was joined by 45 other governors in a compact through the National Governors Association to carry on this battle, and today we continue New Jersey’s leadership role, in part, by becoming one of the first states to take on the use, sale, and distribution of illicit fentanyl analogs produced by drug trafficking networks,” said Governor Christie.

The Office of the Attorney General and its Division of Consumer Affairs is issuing an Emergency Order to ban the manufacture, distribution, sale, and possession of seven illegal knock-offs of the highly addictive opioid “fentanyl” which are being manufactured by drug dealers. Additionally, the Governor announced the expansion of the Recovery Coach Program, which connects persons who have been saved from drug overdoses to people who can help them find treatment.

These initiatives were among several unveiled by the Governor as he was joined in his outer office by cabinet members and former Governor James E. McGreevey, director of the New Jersey Reentry Corporation (NJRC), which was funded by the Christie Administration to provide addiction treatment, transitional housing, job training and employment to ex-offenders with substance use disorder.

FENTANYL EMERGENCY ORDER

This Emergency Order issued by Attorney General Christopher S. Porrino adds seven “fentanyl analogs” – derivatives of the regulated prescription drug - to the list of Schedule I Controlled Dangerous Substances (CDS) in New Jersey, subjecting them to the strictest level of state control.

Used to treat acute pain, fentanyl is up to 50 times more powerful than heroin and 100 times more powerful than morphine. Fentanyl knock-offs, often more potent than their legal prototype, have been sold on street corners across New Jersey, usually disguised as much less potent drugs like heroin, oxycodone, or other abused prescription drugs. The result has been deadly. Last year, the federal Drug Enforcement Administration listed New Jersey as one of five states hit hardest by a “surge” in fentanyl-related deaths. The total had reached 150 by mid-year, according to the latest available statistics.

“Those responsible for supplying the drugs that caused these deaths will no longer be able to fly under the legal radar in our state,” said Attorney General Porrino. “We are empowering our law enforcement agencies with the legal clout to arrest and fully prosecute anyone caught manufacturing, distributing, or possessing these lethal drugs.”

Knock-offs covered by the order include: Furanyl Fentanyl, 3-Methylenfentanyl, 3-Methyl Butyrylfentanyl, Valeryl Fentanyl,

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Norfentanyl, Para-Florobutryl-Fentanyl, and Carfentanyl. Under the order, manufacture, distribution, sale, or possession of the chemicals is now a third-degree crime. Violators are subject to a fine of up to \$25,000 and imprisonment for a three- to five-year term. The Order will remain in effect for 270 days, or until a regulation is adopted through an administrative process to formally classifying the counterfeit drugs as Schedule I CDS.

EXPANSION OF THE RECOVERY COACH PROGRAM

Already demonstrating success in Camden, Essex, Monmouth, Ocean and Passaic counties, the Recovery Coach program connects people who have been saved from drug overdoses – often with the opioid reversal drug Narcan -- with recovery coaches who can provide guidance and support and help them into treatment for their addiction. The Governor announced the program will be expanded into six more counties – Atlantic, Bergen, Burlington, Hudson, Gloucester and Middlesex.

Recovery coaches, who often are in recovery themselves, are on-site in hospital emergency rooms in the five counties where the program already operates. They tap into their own personal recovery experience to help individuals when they are most vulnerable and need support. This initiative ensures a continuum of care for individuals recovering from an overdose reversal.

NARCAN REBATE EXTENSION

The Christie administration reached a deal this summer with Amphastar Pharmaceuticals, Inc., to extend for another year the ability for police departments and other public first responder entities to continue purchasing the opiate antidote Naloxone at a significant discount. Under that agreement, California-based Amphastar will continue to provide a \$6 rebate for each Amphastar Naloxone syringe purchased.

Naloxone – often referred to by its most commonly known trade name Narcan – is an opioid antagonist drug used to reverse overdoses of heroin and other opiate-based narcotics. More than 500 law enforcement agencies across the state, including the New Jersey State Police, are now trained and equipped to administer the drug. Statewide, there were 7,222 deployments of Naloxone by law enforcement and EMS personnel in 2015. Law enforcement and EMS have deployed Naloxone more than 6,000 times so far this year.

In 2015, New Jersey became the third state to obtain a contractual commitment from Amphastar to provide discounts on Naloxone-related purchases. Under the new agreement struck with Amphastar, the Attorney General's Office will continue to act as administrative conduit in the rebate process.

LEGACY OF FIGHTING ADDICTION

The initiatives announced today continue Governor Christie's extensive efforts to combat the epidemic of opioid addiction, including: mandatory, statewide drug courts; expansion of New Jersey's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program to include interstate data-sharing; statewide availability of the overdose reversal drug Naloxone (Narcan); a historic infusion of funding to expand capacity for behavioral health treatment; and formation of an Interim Management Entity (IME), a telephone hotline that provides access for the uninsured and those on Medicaid to addiction treatment.

Recently, the state's Drug Monitoring Initiative at the Regional Operations and Intelligence Center earned national recognition by the National Governors Association and the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy for its groundbreaking efforts to monitor drug activity in the state. Their work there has enabled law enforcement and public health experts to better understand the supply chain, trends, implications, and threats from illicit drug activity and to notify the public of potentially lethal batches of drugs in the region as overdoses are reported.

In addition, this year marks the second anniversary of the Governor's creation of the Facing Addiction Task Force, a 12-member team of leaders and experts from inside and outside of government to fight drug addiction through treatment and prevention. Led by Pastor Joe A. Carter of the New Hope Baptist Church in Newark, the task force has been developing strategies to destigmatize, prevent and treat the disease of addiction with a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach.

In July, Governor Christie along with 45 other governors, signed the National Governors Association's Compact to Fight Opioid Addiction, committing to fight the epidemic. That compact urges the governors to take steps to raise awareness of opioids and addiction, reduce the inappropriate prescribing of painkillers and facilitate treatment and recovery for those already addicted.

"We have made impressive gains in this fight, and we know there is more work to be done," added Governor Christie. "With these new initiatives and the alliance of the National Governors Association, we should be able to help more and more people break the cycle of addiction, to reclaim their lives and to improve the lives of all of us dealing with the consequences of opioid addiction in society."

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