

State of New Jersey

Governor Phil Murphy

## Governor Murphy Announces New Initiatives to Combat the Opioid Epidemic

01/23/2019

**CAMDEN** – Governor Phil Murphy and the Murphy Administration today unveiled several new initiatives to strengthen New Jersey's fight against the opioid epidemic. In 2018, more than 3,000 individuals in New Jersey died due to overdoses.

"The opioid epidemic continues to devastate families and communities across our state," **said Governor Murphy**. "As we combat this crisis, it is critical that we use data-driven, evidence-based strategies to support individuals suffering from addiction and help them get on the path to recovery."

At Cooper University Medical Center in Camden, the Governor outlined his Administration's key strategies for combatting the epidemic:

1. Increasing access to evidence-based prevention and treatment programs in our communities;
2. Supporting individuals on their path to and maintenance of recovery;
3. Building sound data systems and strengthen system-wide infrastructure for the addictions community; and
4. Delivering robust law enforcement to stem the supply of illicit drugs, while also supporting diversion programs.

To advance these strategies, Governor Murphy announced that Medicaid will be removing the requirement for prior authorization for Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT). Prior authorizations have shown to be a timely administrative barrier to life saving treatment for patients. Additionally, Medicaid is launching a suite of initiatives to advance accessibility to MAT. Medicaid is launching the Office Based Addiction Treatment (OBAT) program, which will create new Medicaid reimbursement incentives for primary care providers to provide MAT for opioid addiction. Further, Medicaid will be building Centers of Excellence for opioid treatment at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School and Cooper Medical School of Rowan University.

The Governor also announced the addition of opioid addiction to the Medicinal Marijuana Program (MMP) as an eligible condition. The MMP will have expanded availability by allowing for the use of medical cannabis as an adjunct to MAT for all patients that suffer from opioid addiction, not only those with chronic pain.

After the Governor's announcements, the Commissioners of Human Services, Health, Corrections, Children and Families, Labor and the Attorney General outlined their department's work to advancing the statewide response to the crisis.

"Governor Murphy has made clear that we need all-hands-on-deck to fight the opioid epidemic," **said Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson**. "The Department of Human Services is taking action by removing barriers to opioid addiction treatment, including lifting Medicaid prior authorization requirements for medication to treat opioid addiction, to help speed access to care and make treatment more readily available. In addition to removing these barriers, Human Services is investing in training more primary care clinicians to provide medication-assisted treatment for opioid addiction, creating new Medicaid reimbursement incentives for primary care providers to provide treatment for opioid addiction, and standing up new Medicaid Centers of Excellence to support community-based clinicians in providing opioid addiction treatment."

"We cannot defeat the opioid epidemic and we cannot win the fight against addiction, if we do not work together – and that's exactly what we have been doing," **said Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal**. "While prescription opioid use is down, in the first few weeks of 2019 we have already had over 100 suspected overdose deaths. To save lives – we are coordinating an all-hands-on-deck response – across government and within the Department of Law and Public Safety. We are bringing all of our resources to bear to unleash a full attack on drug addiction. We are in this fight together."

"We are pleased to announce that, as of today, opioid use disorder is a condition for which physicians can recommend medical marijuana to patients," **said Health Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal**. "We are also taking steps to ensure that these patients will be on MAT for their addiction, in addition to marijuana. Finally, DOH is doubling down on syringe access programs and initiatives to reduce opioid prescribing, proven methods for reducing the impact of opioid addiction."

"New Jersey's substance use epidemic requires a thoughtful, coordinated approach which leverages the strengths and subject matter expertise of a variety of State agencies to combat this public health crisis," **said New Jersey Department of Children and Families Commissioner Christine Beyer**. "Programs like Keeping Families Together (KFT) speak to the complexities of the issues around substance abuse – issues of family distress, intergenerational poverty, housing instability, food insecurity and more. When we view substance abuse as a family issue, we can interrupt the cycle of adversity, maltreatment and addiction, and stabilize and preserve the family unit through the difficult work of recovery."

"We know people are more likely to remain in recovery long-term if they can count on steady employment," **said Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo**. "Employment, an important social determinant of health, provides dignity, so this funding has the power to change lives by helping people overcome the employment barrier of opioid use disorder."

"In corrections, we have a responsibility to rehabilitate the entire person, and that includes medical, mental health and substance use disorder needs," **said acting Corrections Commissioner Marcus O. Hicks, Esq.** "By addressing these needs, we increase the likelihood that an incarcerated individual will be in a position to make a positive contribution to society when released. These strategies aren't solely NJDOC initiatives. In order to maximize our chances for successful outcomes, it is imperative that the county jails are included in these initiatives."

Governor Murphy advanced \$100 million from his Fiscal Year 2019 budget to tackle New Jersey's opioid crisis. Through this, the Administration has implemented an aggressive, multifaceted approach to combat the epidemic by making outpatient treatment more accessible, enhancing real-time data collection to focus on risk factors, and expanding access to social services.

For more information, click here ([https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A\\_\\_t.e2ma.net\\_click\\_vhbv5\\_nni2dt\\_7u97gg&d=DwMFaQ&c=4BTEw-1msHjOY4ITcFLmDM6JB8x6ZgbU2J24IH0HZLU&r=TKKqg6WXrh-WbZeCLiV5NoEG69l2rTDhruMUOXBuBmc&m=pslvYImul96rwS0kvn\\_7Xl1Lvmx7GM79yKI8wsNnMP4&s=1ZF0zzeR1ST7qdE72bgwtQ3TGeBq2wGbETKHE1tLMBU&e=](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__t.e2ma.net_click_vhbv5_nni2dt_7u97gg&d=DwMFaQ&c=4BTEw-1msHjOY4ITcFLmDM6JB8x6ZgbU2J24IH0HZLU&r=TKKqg6WXrh-WbZeCLiV5NoEG69l2rTDhruMUOXBuBmc&m=pslvYImul96rwS0kvn_7Xl1Lvmx7GM79yKI8wsNnMP4&s=1ZF0zzeR1ST7qdE72bgwtQ3TGeBq2wGbETKHE1tLMBU&e=)))

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