



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Murphy announces recommendations from Governor's heroin panel

TERRENCE MURPHY June 9, 2016

| COMMITTEE: **HEROIN TASK FORCE**

ALBANY, NY - State Senator Terrence Murphy today joined Governor Andrew M. Cuomo to announce the final report and recommendations from the Heroin and Opioids Task Force - a diverse group of experts in healthcare, advocacy, education, law enforcement, as well as parents and New Yorkers in recovery - charged with developing a comprehensive plan to combat the state's heroin and opioid epidemic. Senator Murphy was appointed to the Task Force by the Governor earlier this year following his leadership as co-chair of the Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Abuse.

The Task Force's key recommendations include mandating prescriber education on pain management and addiction, reducing the number of days for first-time opioid prescriptions for acute pain from 30 to seven, requiring consumer education on prescription opioids, increasing public outreach and awareness, eliminating prior authorization for needed inpatient treatments and medications to treat addiction, expanding access to overdose-reversal medication, increasing treatment beds and opioid treatment program slots, expanding access to spaces and supports for individuals in recovery, and updating the controlled substances schedule.

"The report released today by Governor Cuomo's Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Abuse shines another light, in a bipartisan manner, on an issue that is so critical to the people of New York," Senator Murphy said. "I commend the Governor and Lieutenant Governor for their commitment and leadership during this task force's tenure and am confident that we will pass milestone legislation this year to advance our efforts to win New York's war on addiction."

"After listening to community leaders and experts, the Task Force has put forward important, sensible recommendations that include increasing outreach and awareness, mandating prescriber education requirements and expanding access to treatment programs" Governor Cuomo said. "These recommendations will build on this administration's aggressive efforts and serve as a comprehensive blueprint to end this epidemic and save lives across New York."

The Task Force was co-chaired by Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul and New York State Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services Commissioner González-Sánchez

"At Governor Cuomo's direction, I am proud to co-lead this Task Force as we crisscrossed the state and listened to the heartbreaking stories of people whose lives were shattered by this public health crisis," said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, Co-Chair of the Task Force. "Today, we set forth an aggressive response, attacking from all angles -- providing tighter controls on prescriptions along with improved access to treatment. Once signed into law, New York State will be a model for the rest of the nation to follow."

"Through this comprehensive package of measures, we are leading the way in pushing back against the rise in heroin and prescription opioid addiction that continues to plague our state and country," said Heroin Task Force Co-Chair, NYS OASAS Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez. "The Task Force report announced today builds upon our aggressive

efforts to curb this epidemic and enables us to take those efforts to the next level. With input from members of the Heroin Task Force and community members all around the state, these changes will make addiction treatment more easily accessible, ensure insurance coverage for substance use disorder care, and support statewide prevention and recovery efforts."

The Task Force held two executive meetings and eight listening sessions across the state. From Brooklyn to Buffalo, they heard from health care providers, family support groups, educators, law enforcement officials, and community members. Hundreds of New Yorkers submitted comments via [www.ny.gov/herointaskforce](http://www.ny.gov/herointaskforce).

To address the root causes of the current epidemic, improve access to life-saving treatment and medications, and expand supports for individuals in recovery and their families, the Task Force made 25 recommendations, including:

Remove insurance barriers to inpatient treatment by eliminating prior approval for admission for necessary medical care as long as such inpatient treatment is needed.

Mandate that insurers use an objective, state-approved criteria when making coverage determinations for necessary inpatient treatment.

Increase the number of treatment beds and program slots for substance use disorder across the state.

Mandate prescribers to complete ongoing education on pain management, palliative care, and addiction.

Limit opiate prescriptions for acute pain from 30-days to no more than a 7-day supply, with exceptions for chronic pain and other conditions.

Mandate that pharmacists educate consumers on the risks associated with prescription opioids.

Expand access to lifesaving overdose-reversal medication by providing insurance coverage

for family members and permitting certain licensed professionals to administer the medication in emergency situations without risk to their license.

All 25 recommendations are available [here](#).

Commissioner of Health Dr. Howard Zucker said, "Overcoming the epidemic of heroin and prescription opioid abuse requires that we confront this public health problem from several angles at once, and that's what these recommendations are doing. Our goals are to prevent people from becoming addicted in the first place, while treating and assisting those who are already trapped in the cycle of abuse. Today's recommendations will help us achieve both goals, and protect New Yorkers from the devastating effects of these drugs."

Maria T. Vullo, Acting Superintendent of Financial Services said, "Opioid addiction is a terrible epidemic that has shattered the lives of far too many New Yorkers. I am proud to have been a part of the Governor's task force and to build upon the important health insurance reforms the Governor has previously enacted by now recommending additional insurance reforms to combat addiction, including the elimination of prior authorization and mandating necessary treatments."

Assemblywoman Linda Rosenthal said, "I am pleased to see that the report reflects the need for continuing medical education for medical professionals who prescribe opioids, an increase in the number of treatment beds statewide, and more long-term supportive housing for addiction recovery. It is imperative that we continue to work to ensure that all New Yorkers who struggle with substance use disorder will be connected with treatment and recovery services."

The Task Force's work builds on the Governor's longstanding commitment to individuals and families facing addiction. In 2012, Governor Cuomo signed legislation updating the

Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) Registry (also known as I-STOP) to require pharmacies to report "real time" information about controlled substances dispensed, require health care practitioners to consult the PMP Registry before prescribing or dispensing certain controlled substances, and mandate electronic prescribing to curb fraud and abuse. By the end of 2015, I-STOP had led to a 90 percent decrease in "doctor shopping" - when patients visit multiple prescribers and pharmacies to obtain prescriptions for controlled substances within a three-month time period. Earlier this year, New York entered into an agreement with New Jersey to share PMP data both ways and prevent "doctor shopping" across state borders.

In 2014, Governor Cuomo signed legislation granting Good Samaritan protections to individuals who administer an opioid antagonist (such as naloxone) to save a life, expanded access to naloxone by allowing non-patient-specific prescriptions, enacted insurance reforms to improve treatment options for individuals suffering from addiction, directed OASAS to create a wraparound services demonstration program to provide services to adolescents and adults for up to nine months after successful completion of a treatment program, and enhanced penalties to crack down on illegal drug distribution. That series of reforms also included expansion of insurance coverage for substance use disorder; programming to increase treatment access and enhance treatment capacity across the state, including a major expansion of opioid treatment services; implementing new and expanded recovery services; and launching a public awareness and education campaign to inform New Yorkers of the dangers of heroin use and opioid misuse and to address the stigma of addiction.

New Yorkers struggling with an addiction, or whose loved ones are struggling, can find help and hope by calling the State's HOPEline at 1-877-8-HOPENY (1-877-846-7369) or by texting HOPENY (Short Code 467369). New Yorkers can find an OASAS-certified substance use disorder treatment provider any time by using the OASAS Treatment Bed Availability

Dashboard. For help with accessing care and insurance coverage, visit the Access Treatment page on the OASAS website.

To find a naloxone overdose reversal medication training near you, visit the OASAS Addiction Treatment Center opioid overdose prevention trainings page. Visit [www.combatheroin.ny.gov](http://www.combatheroin.ny.gov) for more information on addressing heroin and prescription opioid abuse, including a Kitchen Table Tool Kit to help start the conversation about the warning signs of addiction and where to get help. For additional tools to use in talking to a young person about preventing underage drinking or drug use, visit the State's Talk2Prevent website.