



OPIOID COMMAND CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 7, 2019

Wolf Administration Highlights Work to Address Opioid Crisis, Vows Continued Effort in Second Term

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf and his administration pledged today to continue working tirelessly during his second term to combat the opioid crisis through the areas of prevention, rescue and treatment as they highlighted work completed to fight the crisis over the past four years.

“My administration has worked to assist those people who are struggling with opioid use disorder by increasing access to Medicaid, offering a free hotline for people to get help and providing naloxone to first responders and the public,” Governor Wolf said. “We are hopeful the number of opioid deaths is decreasing, and we pledge to continue our efforts to assist people affected by this epidemic.”

In February 2015, Governor Wolf expanded Medicaid in Pennsylvania, allowing more than 125,000 to receive treatment for substance use disorders. Also, in 2015, then-physician general Dr. Rachel Levine signed a standing order for naloxone, the lifesaving opioid overdose reversal medication; the governor began a series of more than 90 opioid roundtable discussions; the Department of Human Services opened 45 Centers of Excellence for opioid use disorder treatment in communities across the commonwealth; and the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs introduced the warm handoff program to get more people into treatment for opioid use disorder, all leading up to the January 2018 opioid disaster declaration, which has been renewed four times, most recently in December 2018.

Since Governor Wolf first signed the heroin and opioid disaster declaration, 16 state agencies, through the Opioid Command Center (OCC), have continuously worked to fight the opioid epidemic and have made significant progress to help individuals and families dealing with this crisis.

Under the disaster declaration, some accomplishments include waiving birth certificate fees for individuals seeking treatment, using federal Medicaid funding in treatment facilities to provide

more than 12,000 individuals access to medically necessary treatment, and providing career services to people who have been impacted by the opioid epidemic and plan to return to work.

“The latest renewal of the disaster declaration, which has covered nearly a year, shows that there is still work to be done to address this crisis,” Gov. Wolf said. “Addressing this crisis requires a multi-faceted approach involving a wide range of state agencies, including health-related agencies, public safety and law enforcement, and community partners.”

Recently, the Wolf Administration distributed 6,105 kits of naloxone as part of Stop Overdoses in PA: Get Help Now Week, a statewide initiative to get the overdose reversal medication naloxone to Pennsylvanians and get help for residents suffering from the disease of opioid-use disorder. An additional 1,465 people left their name and contact information requesting to receive naloxone.

Governor Wolf’s efforts over the past four years, working with state agencies, local, regional and federal officials, have resulted in significant action to address the opioid crisis:

- The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program has reduced the prescription of opioids by more than 20 percent and has virtually eliminated doctor shopping.
- The Opioid Data Dashboard and Data Dashboard 2.0 has provided public-facing data regarding prevention, rescue and treatment.
- Eight PacMAT centers are serving as part of a hub-and-spoke model to provide treatment to people where they live.
- The establishment of the OCC and its capacity to facilitate coordination across agencies has helped to tear down silos and provide solutions to this crisis and discuss areas of work that overlap among several agencies in a streamlined manner.
- The waiver of birth certificate fees for those with opioid use disorder has helped more than 1,100 people gain easier entry into recovery programs.
- A standing order signed by Dr. Rachel Levine in 2018 allowed EMS to leave behind more than 620 doses of naloxone.
- More than 45 Centers of Excellence, administered by the Department of Human Services, are now providing evidence-based treatment to those on Medicaid suffering from a substance use disorder.
- The DART survey referral system was introduced to assist getting those who need treatment in navigating available resources.
- More than 1,500 prescribers in 2018 received education and with funding available to reach another 2,000 additional in 2019.
- More than 22,000 physicians have received training on how to prescribe opioids cautiously and judiciously.
- 811 drug take-back boxes helped properly dispose of 482,000 pounds of unwanted drugs in 2018.
- The Get Help Now Hotline received more than 15,000 calls this year, with 45 percent of callers connected directly to a treatment provider.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) has expanded its Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program and began testing its MAT initiatives in 2018.
- A DOC body scanner pilot project proved successful in reducing overdoses and violent crime in a number of facilities and is currently being expanded to additional facilities.
- More than 100 licensed physicians or prescribers have been disciplined for wrongful practice over the past two years.

- PA schools have received education and training on opioids with plans in place to make opioid education a standard component of school-based training.
- More than 25,000 doses of naloxone have been purchased and distributed through the county entities, leading to 4,501 reversals.
- Announced Medicaid waiver for prior authorization requirements for evidence-based opioid use disorder treatments, with commercial insurers quickly following suit.
- Assisted local partners in developing strategic plans and funding community-based intervention programs through grants such as Cumberland County's opioid court.
- Law enforcement seized heroin, fentanyl among other illicit drugs to help keep them off the street.

Find a link to a complete 2015-2108 timeline of accomplishments [here](#).

"The opioid crisis has been and continues to be a priority, and we will continue to work to assist those affected by the disease of addiction, their loved ones, and their communities," Governor Wolf said. "I am committed to continuing this important work in my second term."

MEDIA CONTACT: J.J. Abbott, 717-783-1116

###

NOTE: The following are satellite coordinates for the press conference. The feed will be available at 3:15 p.m.

EVENT: Opioid Epidemic Update

DATE: Monday, January 7, 2019

TIME: 15:15 to 15:30 (Eastern)

FORMAT: 16 x 9 HD 720p

SATELLITE: Galaxy 17 (KU-Band - DIGITAL)

ORBITAL POSITION: 91 Degrees West

TRANSPONDER: K 12

CHANNEL: Lower (18Mhz)

SYM RATE: 13.235 msp

FEC: 3/4

BIT RATE: 18.295441

DOWNLINK POL: Vertical

DOWNLINK FREQ: 11931.00 MHz

Modulation Type: DVB-S, QPSK

TROUBLE: 717-772-4282