

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 219

WHEREAS, the abuse of opioids and other controlled dangerous substances is one of the greatest challenges facing this State; and

WHEREAS, between 2014 and 2015, drug-overdose deaths increased by nearly 22 percent in this State, with nearly 1,600 people losing their lives to narcotics in New Jersey alone in 2015; and

WHEREAS, nationally, it is estimated that an American dies every 19 minutes from an overdose of heroin or prescription opioids; and

WHEREAS, one cause of this increasing crisis is the overabundance of prescription opioids, with evidence showing that four out of five new heroin users began their addiction by misusing prescription pain killers; and

WHEREAS, current regulations permit medical providers to prescribe up to 30 days of powerful narcotics to their patients without the need specifically to evaluate whether a shorter prescription would be sufficient, or the need to explain to the patient the severe dangers involved with prescription opioids and substance abuse; and

WHEREAS, there is evidence indicating that addiction to opioid medication can occur within days of first use; and

WHEREAS, an estimated 20% of adolescents with currently prescribed opioid medications report using those medications intentionally to get high or increase the effects of alcohol or other drugs; and

WHEREAS, the indiscriminate over-prescribing of addictive controlled dangerous substances by certain medical providers is contributing to the increasing crisis, and the Attorney General

has pursued, and will continue to pursue, actions against doctors who have improperly prescribed opioids; and

WHEREAS, another cause of this crisis is the early use by children of controlled dangerous substances and other illicit substances, with evidence showing that if a child tries any drug by the age of 13, he or she has a 70% probability of developing an addiction by the age of 20; and

WHEREAS, there are currently barriers in our State for those afflicted by addiction to seek the treatment and help that they need; and

WHEREAS, as one example, due to licensing barriers certain kinds of substance abuse treatment facilities providing services for those under the age of 18 are operating under capacity and with empty beds, while similar facilities are over capacity and with waiting lists of persons aged 18 and 19 years old; and

WHEREAS, on October 9, 2014, I signed Executive Order No. 163, creating the Facing Addiction Task Force, which task force consists of public and private members charged with studying the many issues surrounding substance abuse and addiction and making recommendations to the Governor; and

WHEREAS, the Facing Addiction Task Force has made great strides in developing a thorough understanding of the many issues surrounding substance abuse and control, and its many recommendations have proven valuable as the State continues to fight this epidemic; and

WHEREAS, the severity of the crisis requires that the advisory work of the Facing Addiction Task Force be supplemented by a new body comprised of State government actors specifically

empowered to perform a broad range of actions in a multi-faceted approach to stem the epidemic; and

WHEREAS, while this newly-created body prepares to execute on comprehensive methods to stem the drug abuse crisis, there are certain actions that can be taken immediately by State actors to produce positive results in the near term;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, CHRIS CHRISTIE, Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby DECLARE, ORDER and DIRECT:

1. The abuse of and addiction to opioid drugs is a public health crisis in New Jersey, necessitating the marshalling of all appropriate resources to combat its harmful effects on the citizens of our State;

2. There is hereby created a "Governor's Task Force on Drug Abuse Control" (hereinafter "the Drug Abuse Task Force").

3. The Drug Abuse Task Force shall consist of eight (8) members, which shall consist of (i) the Attorney General, (ii) the Commissioner of the Department of Health, (iii) the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services, (iv) the Commissioner of the Department of Corrections, (v) the Commissioner of the Department of Education, (vi) the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families, and (vii) the Commissioner of the Department of Banking and Insurance, each of whom shall serve ex officio and may appoint a designee, as well as (viii) a Chairperson who shall be appointed by the Governor and who shall serve at his pleasure.

4. All members of the Drug Abuse Task Force shall serve without compensation.

5. The Drug Abuse Task Force is charged with developing and executing on a comprehensive, coordinated strategy to combat the drug abuse epidemic by working with all areas of state government. The Drug Abuse Task Force shall further cooperate with local, federal, and private entities, as well as the Facing Addiction Task Force, as appropriate in carrying out its mission.

6. The Task Force shall review current statutes and regulations that present barriers to individuals suffering from addiction to receiving treatment and make recommendations to rescind or amend any such statutes or regulations to remove those barriers.

7. The Drug Abuse Task Force shall be authorized to call upon any department, office, division, or agency of this State to supply it with information, personnel, or other assistance available as the Drug Abuse Task Force deems necessary to discharge its duties under this Order. Each department, office, division, and agency of this State is hereby required, to the extent not inconsistent with law, to cooperate fully with the Drug Abuse Task Force within the limits of its statutory authority and to furnish the Drug Abuse Task Force with such assistance on as timely a basis as is necessary to accomplish the purposes of this Order. The Drug Abuse Task Force may consult with experts or other knowledgeable individuals in the public or private sector on any aspect of its mission.

8. The Drug Abuse Task Force shall organize and meet as soon as practicable to begin performing the charges set forth in this Order.

9. The Drug Abuse Task Force shall routinely report to the Governor on its strategic plan and activities.

10. Exercising his authority under N.J.S.A. 45:1-17(b) and in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, N.J.S.A. 52:14B-1 et seq., the Attorney General is hereby directed to take all steps necessary to limit the initial prescription of opioids for acute pain. The Attorney General shall establish standards such that additional quantities of prescription pain killers may be prescribed only after further consultation with the patient and an evaluation of the need for such prescription, and such other standards as the Attorney General shall deem appropriate. The Attorney General shall coordinate with the Drug Abuse Task Force as appropriate in carrying out this mandate.

11. The Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families is instructed to take such steps as are necessary to ensure that residential substance use disorder treatment facilities and similar facilities are able to utilize their existing spaces effectively, including by taking such action as is necessary to ensure that 18 and 19 year-olds with substance abuse problems are able to take advantage of any vacancies in existing facilities wherever appropriate. The Commissioner shall coordinate with the Drug Abuse Task Force as appropriate in carrying out this mandate.

12. The Commissioner of the Department of Education is hereby directed to develop a new, comprehensive curriculum to educate children about the dangers of substance abuse. The curriculum shall be tailored to each specific grade and shall include such elements and requirements as the Commissioner deems

most appropriate properly to educate New Jersey's students. The Commissioner shall coordinate with the Drug Abuse Task Force as appropriate in carrying out this mandate.

13. This Order shall take effect immediately.

GIVEN, under my hand and seal this
17th day of January,
Two Thousand and Seventeen,
and of the Independence of
the United States, the Two
Hundred and Forty-First.

[seal]

/s/ Chris Christie

Governor

Attest:

/s/ Thomas P. Scrivero

Chief Counsel to the Governor