



JOHN R. KASICH
GOVERNOR
STATE OF OHIO

FIGHTING DRUG ABUSE AND ADDICTION

Ohio Is Now on the Leading Edge of States in Fighting the Challenges of Drug Abuse and Addiction

Governor John R. Kasich worked aggressively to develop the nation's most comprehensive approach to fighting drug abuse and addiction – a community-centered plan of action based on four strategic pillars: Treatment, Prevention, Education and tougher, more effective Enforcement that's aimed at the drug traffickers and pill-mill operators who are injecting this poison into our communities. As a result of this work, prescription opioid deaths are at seven-year lows, opioid prescriptions have been reduced by almost 30 percent, doctor shopping has nearly been eliminated and Ohio is seeing record drug interdiction.

- **Making Unprecedented Investments to Help Local Communities Fight Drugs:** Ohio invests \$1 billion annually to help communities battle the scourge of drug abuse and addiction at the local level. Because of this strong commitment, Ohio communities have access to significant funding to help them address treatment, prevention and law enforcement. Those resources include:
 - Helping communities purchase the life-saving drug naloxone
 - Investing in specialized drug courts that link offenders with treatment
 - Providing safe, stable housing to help drug-addicted Ohioans recover
 - Increasing funding for individuals needing addiction and behavioral health treatment
 - Enforcing Ohio's drug laws to prevent the illegal distribution of powerful synthetic opioids
- **Establishing a Strike Team to Quickly Respond to the Evolving War on Drugs:** In 2011, Ohio established the Governor's Cabinet Opiate Action Team – with leading experts from addiction prevention and treatment professions, health care, public health and law enforcement – committed to a goal of staying on the leading edge of the fight against opioid abuse and swiftly finding new ways to respond to changes in the drug market. Coordinating the efforts of multiple Cabinet agencies, this team has been integral to the development of Ohio's comprehensive strategy, including creation of a toolkit to help communities across the state implement strategies critical to Ohio's fight against drug abuse.
- **Cutting the Pill Supply:** The first order of business for the Governor's Cabinet Opiate Action Team was development of legislation to shut down pill mills, helping reduce the number of pills diverted and sold on the street for illicit use.
- **Stepping Up Enforcement Efforts:** The Ohio State Highway Patrol has placed a heavier emphasis on stopping drugs traveling through the state, rather than merely writing citations. Since 2011, the Highway Patrol had made more than 76,000 drug arrests and seized \$421 million in illegal drug contraband. In addition, the state's professional regulatory boards have drastically increased efforts since 2011 to identify and take action against illicit activity that contributes to the opioid crisis.

- **Increasing Patient Awareness of the Risk of Opioid Misuse and Addiction:** Addressing pain before it becomes a chronic problem can lead to more effective treatment. In 2018, the Kasich Administration developed new rules for prescription opioids for the treatment of long-term pain (lasting 12 weeks or more) and sub-acute pain (lasting between six and 12 weeks). These new rules strengthen communication between physicians and patients by establishing check points for additional assessment to ensure that anyone with long-term prescribed opioids is more carefully managed. Physicians are now required to engage in conversations with patients before starting on long-term medication treatment to ensure opioids are actually improving function and the patient is offered other non-opioid treatments when appropriate.
- **Empowering Prescribers and Pharmacists to Prevent Opioid Abuse:** Ohio's prescription drug reporting and monitoring system is one of the strongest in the nation, and data now available to prescribers and pharmacists give these professionals more tools to promote responsible use of prescription opioids. The state has implemented rules requiring prescribers and pharmacists to check the system in order to provide a complete view of what additional controlled substances a patient may be receiving. The state has also offered a seamless integration with health care providers' electronic record systems. As a result of these efforts, Ohio has seen:
 - Total doses of opioids dispensed to Ohio patients decreased by 225 million doses (or 28.4 percent) from 2012 to 2017.
 - A 3.3 million decrease in the number of opioid prescriptions issued to Ohio patients between 2012 and 2017.
 - The total doses of benzodiazepines dispensed to Ohio patients decreased by 64 million doses from 2012 to 2017.
 - An 88 percent decrease in the number of individuals who see multiple prescribers in order to obtain controlled substances illicitly (commonly referred to as "doctor shopping") between 2011 and 2017.
- **Treating Addiction in Ohio's Prisons:** Knowing that many Ohio prison inmates have histories of drug and alcohol addiction and those who don't overcome their addiction have a higher likelihood of re-entering prison after their release, the Kasich Administration worked to integrate addiction specialists in prisons to provide inmates help to overcome addiction while they are serving their sentences and provide a seamless transition of services and supports to ensure sustained recovery after their release.
- **Preventing Drug Abuse Before It Starts:** Ohio launched a youth drug prevention program, called *Start Talking!* that provides parents, teachers, and communities with simple tools to start conversations about drugs since research shows that children whose parents or other trusted adults talk with them about the risks of drugs are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs than those who have not had those critical conversations.
- **Improving Treatment for Those Most in Need:** More than 500,000 low-income adults were treated for mental health and addiction thanks to Gov. Kasich's decision to expand Medicaid. Treatment programming connected with drug courts has also proven successful, with medication-assisted treatment programs now established in courts in seven counties and demonstrating results that increase employment and stable housing while decreasing recidivism. Ohio has also funded efforts to support best practices for our most vulnerable population, babies born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome, improving treatment across the state.
- **Saving Lives through Naloxone:** As more powerful versions of opioids find their way to communities, Ohio took numerous steps to expand access to the opioid overdose-reversal drug naloxone to first responders and families of those addicted. Ohio pharmacies can now dispense naloxone over the counter without prescription for family members

or friends of those in danger of overdosing. Public health programs make naloxone available to those in need, including family and friends, in more than half of our counties.

- **Strengthening Prescription Drug Oversight and Encouraging Responsible Treatment:** In early 2017, Gov. Kasich signed new reforms to improve oversight of individuals who have access to prescription opioids, ensure responsible opioid addiction treatment, expand access to life-saving naloxone, hold pharmacy technicians to stronger accountability, establish new oversight for purchasing and distributing controlled substances, limit high-volume prescriptions to prevent misuse and establish common sense regulation for methadone clinics.
- **Enacting New Regulations for Drug Wholesalers:** Wholesalers are a critical central link in the drug supply chain and can play an important role in alerting officials to problems on the frontlines. New regulations will help define that role more clearly and create uniform, consistent guidelines for what is expected from wholesalers and how they can comply. With additional data from wholesalers, Ohio regulatory and law enforcement officials will be able to make Ohio's work to combat prescription drug abuse even more effective and save more lives from the addiction epidemic.
- **Developing an Innovative Program to Help Employers Address Employees with Substance-Use Disorder:** The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation launched the Opioid Workplace Safety Program, a pilot effort providing up to \$5 million over two years to help employers in Montgomery, Ross and Scioto counties hire, manage and retain workers in recovery. BWC will partner with county Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health boards to coordinate the pilot program.
- **Pursuing Scientific Breakthroughs to Battle Drug Abuse and Addiction:** At Gov. Kasich's urging, the Ohio Third Frontier Commission set aside up to \$20 million to help fund innovative and promising technologies that can help combat the drug epidemic.



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