

Governor Carney Signs Package of Legislation to Combat Addiction Epidemic

Legislation Includes Creating the Nation's first Overdose System of Care

NEW CASTLE, Del. – On Monday, Governor Carney joined Lt. Governor Hall-Long, members of the Behavioral Health Consortium, first responders, and advocates to sign three bills into law aimed at fighting the addiction epidemic and saving lives in Delaware. All three bills, [HS #1 for House Bill 440](#), [Senate Bill 206](#) and [Senate Bill 225](#), are first year priorities of the [Behavioral Health Consortium's Three Year Action Plan](#).

“Today, Delaware became the first state in the nation to enact an Overdose System of Care to improve our state’s care and treatment for Delawareans and families affected by the opioid crisis,” said **Governor Carney**. “We strengthened our Prescription Monitoring Program and we encouraged prescribers and patients to consider using non-opioid methods when treating back pain. These steps will help build on our system of support for those families and individuals dealing with the opioid crisis personally or professionally. Thank you to the members of the General Assembly, advocates and law enforcement for their tireless work on this epidemic affecting far too many Delaware families.”

The package of legislation addresses critical gaps identified by Delaware’s Behavioral Health Consortium which will tackle a range of issues including the creation of the nation’s first Overdose System of Care model to better transition individuals after an overdose or crisis from an emergency room setting to

more comprehensive treatment for their addiction. Additional legislation also creates better access and education to alternative therapies to opioids and improved data sharing of health information between agencies to better assess and analyze prescribing patterns.

All three bills are year one priorities of the Behavioral Health Consortium, chaired by Lt. Governor Hall-Long.

“The addiction crisis ignores income, race, and geography,” said **Lt. Governor Hall-Long**. Delawareans deserve a treatment system that works for them when they need it most. With today’s bill signing, Delaware is another step closer to creating a more comprehensive, integrated, and timely treatment system from initial contact with first responders through the entire continuum of care.”

The legislative package received widespread support from many in Delaware’s General Assembly, most of whom see the devastating impacts of addiction in their communities.

“In Delaware, we are blessed to have a small, tight-knit community that can respond quickly to challenges as daunting as the current opioid epidemic,” said **Sen. Bryan Townsend**. “The bills that we have signed today are the result of that spirit of partnership and cooperation. They are a positive sign for the future of addiction and chronic pain treatment in our state. Our constituents deserve this kind of responsive government and I am as proud to be a part of today’s signing ceremony as I will be to keep the ball rolling next year.”

SB 225 encourages prescribers and patients to consider the use of proven alternative therapies instead of opioids and requires continuing education to prescribers about the risks of opioids and benefits of alternative treatments.

“Few Delawareans have made it through the last few years without being affected by the opioid crisis in some way,” said **Sen. Stephanie Hansen**. As elected officials, we are duty-bound

to respond with every ounce of energy, creativity, and dedication we have to find solutions and make much-needed changes to our system of care, treatment methods, and prescription practices. As we continue to spend long hours poring through the data, news articles, and legislative documents trying to come up with new solutions, I am encouraged to see these bills passed today. They represent the combined efforts of an incredible team of people from all corners of this state and it has been a privilege to do my part in the Senate to get these bills drafted and passed. With the governor's signature now affixed to these new laws, I am looking forward to carrying the momentum into the 150th General Assembly."

"Combatting the addiction epidemic takes a collaborative approach, with many stakeholders coming to the table. The legislation we are signing into law today helps to establish wrap-around systems of care for overdose patients, better identify prescribing patterns and support alternative treatments to opioids," said **Rep. Helene Keeley, D-Wilmington South**. "I was proud to be the prime sponsor of SB 225, and raise awareness about alternative pain care such as physical therapy and chiropractic care. Delawareans who struggle with back pain deserve all options at their disposal. I hope we can build on this legislation and continue the push for access for alternative pain treatments."

Last year, nearly 2,000 individuals in Delaware suffered a non-fatal overdose, yet many continued to be prescribed opioids or did not receive treatment for substance use disorder. This prompted the need for SB 206, to better coordinate data sharing between state agencies and the Delaware Prescription Monitoring Program to study overdose data and create recommendations around safer prescribing and best practices.

"It seems like every day we hear about another overdose, another tragic death or another family struggling to beat

addiction. Addiction doesn't discriminate, and our policies should address the wide-ranging impacts of the disease," said **Rep. David Bentz, D-Christiana**. "It has been an honor to work with the Behavioral Health Consortium and Lt. Governor Hall Long to address this systematic issue. The bills signed into law today by Governor Carney help continue to move Delaware forward and help the many families that struggle with addiction."

Dr. Sandy Gibney, an emergency department physician at St. Francis Hospital was a leading advocate for legislation forming the nation's first Overdose System of Care.

"The importance and impact this legislation cannot be understated, said **Dr. Sandy Gibney, St Francis Hospital**. "Utilizing the 'system of care' approach for substance use disorder and overdose care will ensure that an effective and collaborative statewide treatment and intervention plan will be put in place. The Systems of Care that are already established in Delaware for trauma, pediatric emergencies, and stroke have paved the way for an Overdose System of Care. All have demonstrated to be a highly effective and collaborative method for statewide patient care and treatment."

Delaware's first responders are often on the front lines of the addiction epidemic.

"Emergency medical services providers, such as emergency medical technicians and paramedics, are a vital component of the community health care system, said **Larry Tan, Chief of Emergency Medical Services Division**. "Our experience has demonstrated that leveraging their capabilities in defined 'systems of care' can have a significantly positive impact on survival and the quality of life in our communities."

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