

AG Jennings files suit against Sackler family for role in opioid crisis

Complaint accuses family behind Purdue Pharma of consumer fraud, negligence, and nuisance

Attorney General Kathy Jennings Monday sued seven members of the Sackler family for their role in creating and sustaining the opioid crisis in Delaware.

The individuals named in the [Delaware Superior Court complaint](#) controlled and directed opioid manufacturer Purdue Pharma's two-decade course of falsely and deceptively marketing opioids, sowing the seeds of an epidemic that has destroyed thousands of Delawareans and ripped apart the fabric of Delaware communities.

"The Sacklers have blood on their hands," said Attorney General Jennings. "More than 1,400 Delawareans suffered fatal drug overdoses from 2014 to 2018, and nearly 200 Delaware lives have been claimed by addiction this year alone. We cannot bring back the loved ones, friends and neighbors who have been taken by the opioid crisis—but we can and must seek justice and accountability for the victims of the Sacklers' avarice, callousness and fraud."

The complaint alleges that, through their controlling stake in Purdue and their intricate involvement in company operations, the Sackler defendants managed, controlled, and directed a decades-long pattern of aggressive sales tactics, misleading literature, and false claims. These tactics were meant to downplay the highly addictive nature of drugs like OxyContin, sell excessive quantities of the drug, and convince doctors, regulatory authorities, and the public that opioid addiction

was the fault of users—many of whom, Purdue claimed, simply needed greater doses of prescription painkillers.

The Sacklers' actions enabled Purdue to overcome the longstanding medical consensus that opioids were unsafe for the treatment of chronic pain and resulted in a significant increase in the number of opioids prescribed nationwide. From 1999 to 2016, the number of opioids prescribed nationwide—and, notably, deaths from prescription opioid use—quadrupled.

The Sacklers profited exorbitantly from their self-serving tactics. From 2008 through 2013 alone, the Sackler defendants voted to pay themselves—either personally or through their holding companies and trusts—billions in Purdue profits.

Attorney General Jennings has a separate suit pending against Purdue Pharma and other companies in the opioid supply chain for their role in the opioid crisis. That case is ongoing in Superior Court.