

Heroin and Prescription Opiates are devastating families and communities across New York State. The family tragedies are overwhelming. Young people age 25 and under are particularly impacted. Even with advances in health insurance parity laws requiring substance abuse services to be covered in similar ways to other diseases, those suffering from addiction, along with their families, have an extremely difficult time accessing treatment services in a timely manner. Although regulations for the use of opiate overdose reversal medication, Naloxone/ Narcan, have been changed to allow greater access to this lifesaving tool, there are still institutional barriers to full implementation of this policy.

According to the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS), “nearly half of young people who inject heroin report abusing prescription painkillers before starting heroin. From July 2013 to June of 2014, there were 238,000 admissions to OASAS programs. For those admissions, 32% identified heroin and other opioids as the primary abused substance. Over the last ten years there has been a 126% increase in admissions among young people who abuse opiates. Young adults, age 18 to 24, had the largest increase in admissions during this time. Between 2005 -2014 heroin treatment admissions among upstate New York residents increased by 115% and admissions in Long Island increased by 116%. Approximately 8,500 admissions were for individuals under 18, with 6% identifying heroin and opiates as the primary abused substance.”

### To these ends, we propose:

- **Fund the Governor’s proposal of \$616 million in All Funds appropriations to the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) including:**
  - **Allocation of \$141 million to address the growing heroin and opiate epidemic:** This funding will support the creation of local recovery support services such as Recovery Community Centers, Recovery Coaches, Family Recovery Navigators, Adolescent Clubhouses, Treatment Availability Tool, Kitchen Table Toolkit and Talk2Prevent. According to the OASAS Treatment Insurance Work Group report from December 2015, patients and their families struggle to navigate the current treatment system and understand their insurance benefit requirements. This issue impedes access to a smooth continuum of care from one level of treatment to another. For young people in particular, this care is crucial because if a person who has stopped using heroin and other opioid relapses, the risks of overdose increase significantly. When people go into a hospital emergency department, those whose overdoses were reversed often do not receive a substance use disorder assessment or a linkage to care.
  - **Full implementation of the NYS OASAS Residential Redesign:** According to NYS OASAS, “this will create flexibility within the system to allow providers to serve individuals in need of short-term and long-term treatment as they de-tox from heroin and prescription painkillers.”
- **Approve A-355–S4348, Mandatory addiction and recovery education for physicians:** The Assembly must pass A-355. The Senate passed companion bill, S4348. The Governor must then sign into law. It authorizes the commissioner of health to establish standards, and review and implement requirements for physicians to receive continuing medical education on pain management, palliative care and addiction.

**Increase access to opiate overdose reversal medication, Naloxone/ Narcan, in schools:** In 2015, Education and Public Health Laws were amended to allow schools to provide and maintain overdose reversal medications. Furthermore, registered nurses in schools are now authorized to administer opioid-related overdose treatment pursuant to a non-patient specific order and protocol prescribed by a licensed physician or a certified nurse practitioner. Schools, however, are slow to implement this policy due to lack of understanding of the legal changes regarding liability. All schools must have this lifesaving medication on-site and staff must be trained to recognize and intervene in the event of an opiate overdose.

## Talking Points: Heroin and Prescription Opiates/ Opioids

- **Support the Governor’s \$616 million proposal to fund the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) including:**
  - **\$141 million to address the growing heroin and opiate epidemic:**
  - **Full implementation of the NYS OASAS Residential Redesign**
    - Creation of local recovery support services
    - Assistance with navigating current treatment systems and understanding insurance benefits
    - Linkage of emergency room treatment to further care based on a substance abuse disorder assessment
- **The Assembly must pass A-355, Mandatory addiction and recovery education for physicians bill:** the Senate passed companion bill, S4348. The Governor must then sign into law. It authorizes the commissioner of health to establish standards, and review and implement requirements for physicians to receive continuing medical education on pain management, palliative care and addiction.
- **Require all schools to have Naloxone/ Narcan on-site, with nurses and staff trained in opiate overdose reversal.** All schools must have this lifesaving medication on site and their staff must be trained to recognize and intervene in the event of an opioid overdose