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State of Rhode Island

Daniel J. McKee
Governor

EXECUTIVE ORDER

22-35

November 2, 2022

EXPANSION OF THE GOVERNOR'S OVERDOSE TASK FORCE

WHEREAS, Rhode Island remains in the midst of a public health crisis due to the alarming rate of deaths caused by opioid drug overdose;

WHEREAS, fentanyl and other contaminants have increased the risk of accidental overdose;

WHEREAS, accidental drug overdoses and ongoing addiction to substances continue to claim the lives of far too many Rhode Islanders;

WHEREAS, the COVID epidemic has worsened the overdose epidemic with more people using drugs alone, without access to anyone who can administer life-saving naloxone medication;

WHEREAS, the challenges posed by gaps in the social determinants of health – including lack of adequate housing, food insecurity, and lack of reliable transportation – make it more difficult for people using drugs to secure treatment and stay in recovery;

WHEREAS, we recognize that addiction is a disease, and that people who use drugs come from diverse backgrounds and live in every part of our State;

WHEREAS, drug overdoses can be prevented and lives can be saved; recovery from drug and alcohol use is possible;

WHEREAS, the impacts of drugs on people using drugs, their families, friends, and communities require that we do all we can to help Rhode Islanders lead healthy, successful, productive lives;

WHEREAS, we must continue to build on the existing work and successful initiatives of the Governor's Overdose Task Force, state agencies, and community partners to contain this epidemic, such as the prescription monitoring program and the recovery coach model, now replicated in other states;

WHEREAS, Rhode Island needs a comprehensive strategy to combat addiction and overdose;

WHEREAS, the membership and reach of the Governor's Task Force must be expanded to include more community leadership and through hiring professional staff; and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island now has additional resources as a result of recent legal settlements with opioid manufacturers and distributors led by Attorney General Peter F. Neronha.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DANIEL J. MCKEE, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Rhode Island do hereby order as follows:

1. In addition to the current agency heads who serve as co-chairs, an additional member of the Rhode Island community shall be appointed as co-chair of the Overdose Task Force. The co-chairs shall have authority to convene meetings and create work groups as necessary that would include Overdose Task Force members and additional community representatives. The Overdose Task Force shall convene monthly public meetings.
2. The Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) shall hire a Director for the Overdose Task Force.

3. The Co-Chairs and Director of the Overdose Task Force shall carry out the following responsibilities with assistance from Task Force members and other state staff as they require:
 - i. Ensuring that the activities of the work groups are aligned to the Overdose Task Force's Strategic Plan and other planning document;
 - ii. Reviewing updates from program project managers to track accomplishments and gaps;
 - iii. Ensuring community engagement in discussions of budget priorities;
 - iv. Setting the agenda for the Task Force meetings;
 - v. Sharing meeting minutes and action items, with a public dashboard; and
 - vi. Other activities as determined by the Task Force;

4. The Overdose Task Force shall continue to carry out strategic planning to address Rhode Island's addiction epidemic, using data to propose solutions. Strategic planning shall include, but not be limited, to the following:
 - i. Providing state agencies and the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee with strategic recommendations from the Overdose Task Force Evidence Update and Strategic Program Review, which shall serve as the Task Force's updated Strategic Plan until such time as the co-chairs request another Strategic Plan update, or until December 1, 2024.
 - ii. Submitting a Race Equity action plan to the Governor by June 1, 2023, that includes recommendations for addressing the addiction crisis with a race equity lens.
 - iii. The plans provided for in sections i) and ii) shall include at least the following:
 - a. Clear goals, objectives, and metrics for measuring progress to combat the addiction and overdose crisis;
 - b. An assessment of available data and current data sharing agreements;
 - c. Proposals to expand the utilization of data to inform decisions on the investment of resources;
 - d. Recommendations for increasing pathways and access to harm reduction materials and a comprehensive harm reduction strategy, appropriate treatment, and support for recovery;
 - e. Strategies to increase awareness of the overdose epidemic, reducing the bias and discrimination associated with substance use disorders, and improving prevention education;

- f. Improving the prescription monitoring program and ensuring that prescription opioids are available only in appropriate circumstances;
 - g. Improving coordination and collaboration with other states, the federal government, and local partners, including nonprofit agencies, hospitals, healthcare and service providers, and academia; and
 - h. A summary of any barriers to treatment and obstacles to success in driving down the rate of addiction and overdose deaths in Rhode Island.
 - i. Alignment with the processes and procedures carried out by the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee, as noted in the Advisory Committee planning documents. The Task Force is tasked as a part of the opioid settlements to help provide community input to the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee, and to support the Committee's work in making recommendations for future funding.
5. Additional staff support for the Overdose Task Force shall be provided by EOHHS, the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals, the Department of Health, and other state agencies as appropriate.
6. The Overdose Task Force shall provide a report to the Governor regarding its progress to reduce drug overdose deaths semi-annually beginning March 31, 2023.

This Order shall take effect immediately.

So Ordered,



Daniel J. McKee
Governor