



# SCOTT WALKER

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Governor Walker Takes Additional Action to Fight Opioid Crisis**

*Wisconsin continues to lead the way forward*

**MADISON** – Governor Scott Walker will issue two Executive Orders today addressing the opioid crisis in Wisconsin. The orders embody recommendations set forth by the Governor’s Task Force on Opioid Abuse to create a Commission on Substance Abuse Treatment Delivery to study the “hub-and-spoke” opioid treatment model and to implement new practices in multiple state agencies. Governor Walker will sign the orders later today in a signing ceremony at the Eau Claire County Sheriff’s Office along with Task Force Chairs Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch and Representative John Nygren (R—Marinette).

“Wisconsin is a national leader in addressing the opioid crisis, as we’ve signed 28 bipartisan bills into law so far,” said Governor Scott Walker. “But there’s more work to be done: too many Wisconsin families feel the painful effects of this crisis every day. Through the guidance and recommendations of the Task Force, we’ve created reforms that will open the door to the best treatment outcomes for patients and their families.”

The prevalence of opioid misuse and abuse throughout Wisconsin, and the rest of the country, is at a dangerous level, and the ramifications are tragic and wide-ranging. According to the Department of Health Services (DHS), in 2016, 827 people died in Wisconsin of opioid overdose deaths caused by heroin, or prescription drugs, or both. From 2000 to 2016, the number of deaths in Wisconsin due to prescription opioids increased 600 percent, from 81 to 568 in 2016. Heroin overdose deaths increased 12 times, from 28 deaths in 2000 to 371 deaths in 2016.

“Wisconsin has not been left untouched by the opioid crisis that is sweeping America,” said Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch, co-chair of the Governor’s Task Force on Opioid Abuse. “This epidemic doesn’t have geographic or socioeconomic boundaries—it affects all our communities. Every day we have to raise awareness among families, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Together as a task force we will continue our working to identify and implement solutions that keep Wisconsin as a model of best practices for the nation.”

The state of Wisconsin has taken numerous important steps in recent years to address the public health crisis of opioid abuse. Governor Walker signed the Heroin, Opiate Prevention and Education (HOPE) legislative package into law in April 2014, which among other reforms provides immunity to people contacting authorities for help for someone suffering an overdose and increases funding for substance abuse treatment providers. In September 2016, Governor Walker issued Executive Order #214 creating the Task Force on Opioid Abuse to thoroughly study the opioid crisis and plan approaches to both restrict access to dangerous opioids and increase access to substance abuse treatment. To date, 28 bipartisan bills have been signed into law to combat opioid abuse in Wisconsin.

In addition to the two executive orders Governor Walker will sign today, the Task Force co-chairs also presented the Governor with a report that provides additional recommendations for legislative action.

“I was thrilled to join Governor Walker today in Eau Claire to announce a number of executive orders aimed at combatting the opioid epidemic in Wisconsin,” said State Representative John Nygren (R—Marinette), co-chair of the Governor’s Task Force on Opioid Abuse. “Today is the culmination of months of hard work: a collaboration of industry experts, health care professionals and the recovery community have led to these monumental recommendations. I look forward to continuing to work with Governor Walker as we take historic step towards increasing access to treatment and care to our most vulnerable.”

Executive Order #273 instructs multiple state agencies to adopt the Task Force on Opioid Abuse co-chairs’ recommendations to improve awareness and prevention practices relating to opioids:

- DHS will work to improve the efficiency of care for ex-offenders, cooperate with law enforcement officials in developing training regarding opioid-abuse, convene a faith-based summit on opioids for faith-based officials, and develop a statewide standard for data submission on people seeking substance abuse treatment.
- The Department of Children and Families will revise its Child Protective Services Standards to better reflect the impact of substance abuse issues arising in child welfare cases.
- The State Patrol and Capitol Police will incorporate software involved in reporting and responding to overdose incidents.

Executive Order #274 creates the Governor’s Commission on Substance Abuse Treatment Delivery to study the “hub-and-spoke” delivery model for opioid treatment. The model relies on regional “hubs” that commit to serving as resource centers for addiction treatment and on “spokes” in communities that refer cases in and take referrals from the hubs. The model provides increased access to treatment and addiction care providers throughout the state, and has proved successful in improving treatment delivery in several other states.

Copies of Executive Orders #273 and #274 are attached. Also attached is the report from the Task Force co-chairs to the Governor.

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