



State of New Jersey

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE
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GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE REMARKS AT PARTNERSHIP FOR A DRUG-FREE NEW JERSEY KICK-OFF OF AMERICAN MEDICINE CHEST CHALLENGE

Trenton (November 10, 2011) ... Acting Executive Director John Hulick provided the following remarks at the launch of American Medicine Chest Challenge New Jersey:

"Heroin and other opiate use amongst New Jersey's youth has risen drastically over the last decade a fact reinforced at hearings held in June by the State Commission on Investigation where experts testified prescription pills are easily accessible to teenagers, and a "gateway drug" to heroin.

And, as we heard earlier from Angelo Valente, this fact was again reinforced by the Centers for Disease Control which labeled prescription drug abuse an epidemic. The Centers findings are troubling --- more Americans now perish from prescription pill overdoses every year than do from automobile accidents with the CDC reporting over 14,800 overdose deaths in 2008, 4 times greater than a decade earlier.

In New Jersey we've placed particular focus on heroin and other opiate amongst its youth which can safely be said to have reached epidemic proportions as well. Treatment admissions have exploded in recent years amongst this age group -- admissions for heroin amongst 18-25 year olds are up 25 percent since 2006 while overall admissions for heroin saw a more than 10 percent decline in the same time period. Other opiate use admissions topped more than 3,200 in 2010, jumping from 65 admissions in 2000 and a staggering 1139 admissions in the last year.

Governor Christie has asked the Council to prepare a plan to address this deeply troubling trend which it is in the process of producing. Efforts like that of the Partnership for a Drug Free -- New Jersey and the State Commission on Investigation are also to be applauded for bringing critical and much needed focus to heroin and other opiate use amongst New Jersey's youth.

This is a social and economic problem that is plaguing New Jersey's urban, suburban and rural communities. New Jersey has the distinction of having the highest purity rate for heroin in the nation which has devastating consequences to our youth and communities. We must do a better job addressing this epidemic and we will."

The Challenge is a public health initiative, with law enforcement partnership, to raise awareness about the dangers of prescription drug abuse and provide an opportunity to safely dispose of these drugs. AMCC will be held in over 50 communities throughout New Jersey on November 12, 2011 between 10 am and 2 pm.