



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of the Governor

Executive Order

NUMBER TWENTY NINE (2014)

ESTABLISHING THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON PRESCRIPTION DRUG AND HEROIN ABUSE

Nationally, prescription drug and heroin abuse has reached epidemic proportions. Since 2000, deaths from prescription drug overdoses in Virginia have more than doubled, while deaths from heroin overdoses have doubled in the past two years. Though prescription drugs are generally safe when used as prescribed, the misuse and abuse of prescription painkillers (opioids) can lead to addiction, and even death. In addition, individuals that are addicted to opioids are shifting to heroin, as prescription drugs become less available.

Prescription opioid and heroin abuse has also led to an increased burden on law enforcement and elevated health care costs from drug-related emergency department visits and treatment admissions. While the numbers of Virginians requiring treatment for addiction to drugs are substantial, resources for treating those who are addicted are limited. It is vital to the Commonwealth's interests to take immediate steps to reverse this dangerous trend of abuse. Therefore, I am directing relevant state and local agencies, health and behavioral health care professionals and organizations, law enforcement, and other stakeholders to work together toward reducing prescription opioid and heroin addiction, curtailing related criminal activity, and enhancing the health, safety, and well-being of all Virginians.

Establishment of the Task Force

Accordingly, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor under Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and under the laws of the Commonwealth, including, but not limited to §§ 2.2-134 and 2.2-135 of the *Code of Virginia*, and subject to my continuing and ultimate authority and responsibility to act in such matters, I hereby establish the Governor's Task Force on Prescription Drug and Heroin Abuse ("Task Force").

The Task Force will serve in an advisory role, in accordance with § 2.2-2100 of the *Code of Virginia*, and will be responsible for recommending short-term and long-term measures that can be taken to tackle prescription drug and heroin abuse and addiction, using best practices and evidence-based strategies.

Composition of the Task Force

The Secretary of Health and Human Resources and Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security will serve as Co-Chairs. The Task Force will be composed of representatives from the Office of the Attorney General, legislature, and judiciary, as well as relevant state and local agencies, law enforcement, health and behavioral health care professionals, providers, community advocates, and individuals with personal experience, as appointed by the Governor. The Governor may appoint any other person(s) deemed necessary and proper to carry out the assigned functions.

Key Objectives

The Task Force will offer recommendations to meet the Commonwealth's objectives listed under the following five major areas: 1) education, 2) treatment, 3) data and monitoring, 4) drug storage and disposal, and 5) enforcement.

The Task Force will also recommend specific metrics to be used to track progress in each of these five areas, and will suggest a target for each area with a date by which the goals should be met. Overall, the Task Force will seek measures for the reduction in deaths from prescription drug and heroin abuse within 5 years.

1. Education

- Raise public awareness about the dangers of misuse and abuse of prescription drugs
- Distribute information about appropriate use, secure storage, and disposal of prescription drugs
- Train health care providers regarding best practices for opioid prescribing, pain management, the use of the Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP), and identification and treatment of individuals at risk of substance abuse through screening, intervention, and referral tools
- Train first responders to more effectively respond to calls involving overdose, and use evidence-based interventions to reduce overdose deaths

2. Treatment

- Improve access to and availability of treatment services
- Foster best practices and adherence to standards for treatment of individuals addicted to opioids
- Strengthen and expand the capacity of Virginia's health workforce to respond to substance abuse treatment needs, including encouraging health professions schools and continuing education programs to provide more education about how to identify and treat substance abuse

3. Data and Monitoring

- Share and integrate data among relevant licensing boards, state and local agencies, law enforcement, courts, health care providers and organizations, and programs such as the PMP, in order to clarify and address public safety

and public health concerns, understand emerging trends, and utilize data-driven decision-making to mitigate harm

4. Storage and Disposal

- Advance effective solutions that lead to safe storage and proper disposal of potentially dangerous prescription drugs

5. Enforcement

- Identify and promote evidence-based best practices and strategies across the criminal justice system to address public safety risks and treatment needs of individuals with opioid addiction, training in the use of life saving interventions, expanded alternatives to incarceration, including drug courts, and cross-system collaboration to improve access to and the availability of treatment

Staffing

Staff support for the Task Force will be furnished by the Office of the Secretary of Health and Human Resources and the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, and such other agencies and offices as designated by the Governor. The Task Force will meet upon the call of the Chair at least four times per year. The Task Force will provide initial recommendations to the Governor on or before December 31, 2014, a comprehensive implementation plan by June 30, 2015, and any additional reports as necessary.

Effective Date

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and, pursuant to §§ 2.2-134 and 2.2-135 of the *Code of Virginia*, shall remain in full force and effect for a year from its signing or until superseded or rescinded.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 26th day of September, 2014.



Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor

Attest:

Levar M. Stoney, Secretary of the Commonwealth