



**Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Department
Office of Governor Deval L. Patrick
Press Release**

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**GOVERNOR PATRICK JOINS WITH NEW ENGLAND
GOVERNORS IN MASSACHUSETTS FOR
ANNOUNCEMENT OF REGIONAL STRATEGY TO
ADDRESS OPIOID ABUSE EPIDEMIC**

Governors meet at Brandeis University for roundtable discussion of cross-border initiatives to tackle abuse and recovery needs

WALTHAM, MASS. – Tuesday, June 17, 2014 – Governor Deval Patrick today convened the New England Governors at Brandeis University for a roundtable discussion on opioid abuse and an announcement of a regional strategy to address the epidemic that has impacted families and communities across the region. Governor Patrick of Massachusetts and Governor Peter Shumlin of Vermont co-hosted the summit with Governor Maggie Hassan of New Hampshire, Governor Dannel Malloy of Connecticut and Governor Lincoln D. Chafee of Rhode Island attending.

“This epidemic has affected too many of our families and communities, but if we work together, we can recover together and we will come out of this crisis with strength and hope,” said Governor Patrick. “Each of the New England governors has taken strong action to combat opiate abuse in their own states, and now we are acting together as one region to take on this challenge.”

“We are currently confronted by a crisis that is complicated, controversial and difficult to talk about: the rising tide of heroin and opiate drug addiction and drug-related crime spreading across the country,” Governor Peter Shumlin said. “We are not alone in Vermont in facing this crisis. While we are aggressively working to curb opiate abuse through a series of health, public safety, and prevention initiatives in Vermont, this crisis requires all of us to take action, regionally and nationally. I am proud of my fellow New England Governors for coming together to collaboratively address this crucial issue head on and I am committed to working together on cross-border and other common issues to help those who are addicted and to protect our quality of life.”

Following the roundtable discussion, the New England Governors announced an agreement to explore cross-border Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) data sharing and mandatory registration to help prevent prescription misuse and abuse across the region.

Brandeis University's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Center of Excellence will use existing federal funding to analyze data from each state's PMP and recommend best practices to assist with the region's efforts.

The Governors also announced a plan to explore treatment agreements between state Medicaid programs and a coordinated media campaign around the risks of prescription medication abuse, geared towards youth and parents.

"We know that people battling addiction can get better when a variety of pathways to recovery are provided," said Governor Dannel P. Malloy. "While Connecticut has been actively involved in efforts to combat deaths from overdoses, a regional agreement is a critical step that will allow us to do much more to educate citizens and save lives."

"The rising rates of opioid abuse and overdoses represent one of the most pressing public health and safety challenges facing New Hampshire and New England," said Governor Maggie Hassan. "Working closely with our fellow New England states is critical to addressing this challenge, and this regional collaboration efforts will enhance our ongoing efforts – including implementing our bipartisan health care expansion plan and increasing the safe and effective use of Narcan by first responders - to ensure the health and safety of our communities."

"I want to thank Governors Shumlin and Patrick for hosting this roundtable discussion," Governor Chafee said. "We must work regionally to address this epidemic, and identify the steps we can take to make a difference and save lives. I look forward to joining with our neighboring states to increase prevention methods and reduce opioid abuse."

The New England governors have individually moved initiatives in their states to combat opiate abuse and increase prevention and treatment services. These initiatives include primary prevention campaigns directed to the public, educational campaigns directed at prescribers related to pain management strategies and safe opioid prescribing, data enhancements requiring real time reporting of opiate overdoses, expanded naloxone (Narcan) access, supporting drug take-back days and collection boxes, expansion of treatment options including medication assisted treatment and increased enforcement efforts.

The regional meeting was one of several recommendations made by Governor Patrick's Opioid Task Force, which worked with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to develop a set of findings and recommendations designed to improve the Commonwealth's opioid abuse prevention and treatment systems, increase the numbers of individuals seeking treatment, and support those recovering from addiction.

Governor Patrick accepted the recommendations of the Task Force on June 10 and announced related actions to combat opioid abuse with a focus on prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery. Read more:

<http://www.mass.gov/governor/pressoffice/pressreleases/2014/0610-opioid-task-force-recommendations-and-actions.html>

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