New Jersey Launches Data Dashboard to Share Crucial Opioid Addiction Information

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New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal recently announced the launch of a new data dashboard that is designed to help state agencies share and exchange information related to opioid abuse and addiction.

The Integrated Drug Awareness Dashboard will serve as a tool for public officials from various law enforcement and public safety agencies to access and analyze opioid-related data. While the tool is currently limited to these agencies, there are plans to expand access to public health agencies in the future.

?We are ensuring that our law enforcement strategies are informed by the data,? Grewal said in a press release. ?And we are doing it all by building partnerships with other state agencies, county and local partners, and the private sector.?

The Drug Awareness Dashboard has been in development since February 2018, when the state launched its Coordinator of Addiction Response and Enforcement Strategies office or CARES. This is a body that coordinates the so-called opioid response teams and develops new technologies to help create policies to reverse the state?s opioid addiction trend.

It consolidates data from across the state?s health and law enforcement institutions, including that collected through the State Police?s Drug Monitoring Initiative and the Division of Consumer Affairs? Prescription Monitoring Program. The data includes law enforcement info on opioid-related arrests, as well as drug overdoses, Naloxone administration, and health care information.

Grewal?s office says that combining data streams will ensure that the response to opioid overdoses is more efficient and timely. Click the link to see Newport Beach's top rehab placement programs.

Grewal?s office made two other announcements concerning the opioid problem. The attorney general is planning to expand a program called Operation Helping Hand. This program pairs law enforcement officers with community health partners to engage addicted individuals, as well as those who are considered at risk of drug addiction.

The state also announced a new partnership with Rowan University to provide a subsidized continuing education program for New Jersey?s health care professionals. This will allow them to spot signs of opioid addiction more easily, so they can provide preventative treatments to their patients.

In 2017, New Jersey saw 1,968 drug overdose-related deaths involving opioids. This is according to the National Institutes of Health. This marked a 46 percent increase over the 1,347 deaths recorded in the state back in 2016.

?This is a step toward the state having alternative modes of treatment for drug offenders, rather than simply sending everyone to prison,? said Steve Kearney, medical director at SAS, the software company that designed the dashboard.

Kearney, a doctor of pharmacy who previously spent 17 years as a medical outcomes specialist with Pfizer, said that a data-centric approach could help solve one of the major problems that service providers face, and that is the fact that data is inaccessible.

?The biggest challenge is always ?where is the data',? he said. ?There?s a tremendous amount of data, but how do you get the data so organizations can make good decisions, is the question. Providers will do that if you give them the information.?

The company hopes that the dashboard will serve as one step toward a future wherein the government can take a more sophisticated approach to the problem of opioid addiction. Kearney said that even though drug addiction is a complicated issue, having more data and putting them in the right hands can make the solutions much more apparent.

?Part of my mission is to look at the data they have and start doing true analytical work with it. We know this epidemic is much more complex. We need a 360-degree view of the individual.?

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid or alcohol addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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