



## **California Governor Proposes Expansive New Strategy to Combat Drug Addiction in State Prisons**

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Gov. Gavin Newsom has proposed an expansive new strategy that will tackle the issue of drug addiction in state prisons. The California governor is pushing to spend more than \$233 million over the next two years in order to battle substance abuse in the state's roughly three dozen prisons. This move reflects the increasing frequency of inmate overdoses in recent years.

Newsom's revised budget includes more than \$71 million this year and nearly \$162 million for next year to help treat prisoners who are dealing with addiction. The governor's proposal is receiving praise from health officials, inmate advocates, and lawmakers who have been critical of the prison system's previous efforts to tackle the problem.

"This is a really important step towards addressing the opioid epidemic in California," said Dr. Matt Willis, Marin County's public health officer. Marin County's paramedics are the ones called to San Quentin State Prison whenever inmates are having suspected overdoses.

From May to December of last year, Marin County paramedics received a spike in calls from San Quentin

State Prison because of opioid overdoses. This included two death row inmates who were found dead in their cells in December.

The revised budget promotes the use of medication-assisted treatment to help inmates who are fighting substance abuse and addiction. It will help guide inmates on how to stay sober once they are released.

“The value of this goes way beyond prisons,” Willis added. “This will save lives and money.”

In 2017, 40 inmates died from overdoses in California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) facilities, according to the agency’s data. This makes drug overdose 2017’s fourth most common cause of death among the state’s prisoners.

Last year, KQED reported that at least 750 prisoners overdosed in 2017, but survived after medical intervention. For 2018, the Chronicle reported that 997 inmates were treated for drug or alcohol overdoses. That is a 114 percent increase within three years.

It is safe to say that the state has struggled to ease drug addiction in California’s prisons for years—and the governor’s new revised budget plan may be able to help fix that. Click the link to see Detroit’s top rehab placement programs.

“The number of drug overdoses in California’s prisons has more than doubled in the past three years, so Gov. Newsom’s plan to significantly increase funding for medical-assisted treatments is the right move,” said state Senator Nancy Skinner, who chairs the Senate’s Public Safety Committee. Skinner is also heading the budget panel taking up the proposal. “Treating the root causes of addiction is key to combating the opioid crisis.”

Skinner called on prison officers to consider different strategies to curb the demand for drugs behind bars.

Former California governor Jerry Brown’s administration had a different approach to the overdose problem: fighting the crisis by trying to reduce the flow of drugs into the state’s lockups. Brown’s revised budget in May 2018 included a \$13.8 million proposal to search everyone who enters and exits the California Substances Abuse Treatment Facility and State Prison at Corcoran around the clock, every day for two years.

State prison officials said they were managing the increasingly aggressive tactics used to smuggle illegal drugs into state lockups. Drugs were entering the system in a variety of ways, officials said, including through visitors and guards, vehicles, through the mail, and even by drones. Brown’s proposal also called for a \$3.6 million addiction treatment program.

Newsom's plan calls for substance abuse treatment to be offered to certain inmates within 15 to 18 months of their release in an effort to help them in recovery after their prison stays.

The way to interrupt the cycle of addiction and crime that lands people in court over and over again is to treat the addiction, Willis said.

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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