



New Pennsylvania Legislation Seeks to Expand Limits on Opioid Prescriptions

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Nearly three years after lawmakers launched their first broad effort to curb the opioid epidemic, new legislation that further clamps down on powerful painkiller prescriptions in Pennsylvania have passed the state Senate. This is a part of a broader package to fight opioid addiction.

Gov. Tom Wolf's administration has said that the state is making progress in fighting overdoses. He cited preliminary data from the state coroners association that overdose deaths declined by about 20 percent to around 4,200 in 2018. The Senate wrapped up voting on the new slate of bills, sending them to the House of Representatives.

The package includes one bill that imposes a seven-day limit on opioid painkiller prescriptions for all adults, expanding seven-day limits that lawmakers approved in 2016 on prescriptions for minors and emergency room patients.

The bill will maintain exceptions for the judgment of the prescribing doctor that a longer prescription is necessary to stabilize the patient's condition, including for cancer, hospice care, and chronic pain. Another

exception was added for a major surgical procedure.

The bill passed unanimously after Democrats tried to amend in limits on the new surgery exception to limit prescriptions to 14 days and add wording to define a major surgical procedure. Click the link to see Lockport's top rehab placement programs.

Sen. Gene Yaw, R-Lycoming, the bill's sponsor, said that hospital groups dropped their opposition to the broader prescription limits for adult patients after being able to lower prescription rates using alternatives like over-the-counter painkillers. "They're finding out there are other things they can do," Yaw said.

The Pennsylvania Medical Society, however, opposes the bill saying that it "takes the decision-making out of the hands of physicians". The organization said in a statement that physicians need some degree of autonomy to do what is right for their patients because "medicine is not an exact science".

The organization also pointed to a previous statement from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It warned that its guidelines do not support "abrupt tapering or sudden discontinuation of opioids". The CDC said that such a practice can "result in severe opioid withdrawal symptoms and send some patients in search of another source of opioids." The Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania said it is neutral on the bill.

Back in 2016, the state of Pennsylvania was among the first states to put limits on opioid prescriptions. Since then, states have moved aggressively to limit opioid prescriptions. According to the National Conference of State legislatures, more than 30 states now have limits of some sort.

The new Pennsylvania bill also creates a new second-degree felony that allows prosecutors to charge someone under state law for providing an illegal drug, such as heroin if it inflicts serious injury on the user.

It is worth noting that Pennsylvania is among the hardest-hit states in terms of the opioid epidemic. All over the US, over 130 Americans die every day due to opioid-related overdose. Thousands of people are still dying each year because of this epidemic. In fact, the current opioid epidemic is now considered the worst drug crisis in US history.

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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