

(Aug. 24, 2011) Gov. Kasich announces formation of interstate opiate task force

## **Gov. Kasich announces formation of interstate opiate task force**

*Ohio joining forces with Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia to share best practices, efforts*

COLUMBUS, OH. (August 24, 2011) Building on the momentum created around Ohio's successful in-state efforts to combat prescription opiate addiction, Governor John R. Kasich today announced the formation of an interstate task force with Kentucky, West Virginia and Tennessee. The newly developed Interstate Prescription Drug Task Force held its first meeting today in Ashland, KY.

"Communities across our region have been besieged by the scourge of prescription drug abuse," said Gov. Kasich. "So far, our efforts in Ohio to provide community education, to shut down the unscrupulous pill mills fueling the crisis, and to promote greater access to cost-effective treatment services are having a positive impact. It is my hope that by reaching out to our neighbors, we can share ideas and resources, develop a coordinated response and, ultimately, drive opiate abuse out of the region. Families and communities reeling from fallout of the epidemic deserve nothing less."

At today's event, representatives discussed state-specific strategies, research agenda, identified funding opportunities, and both public and professional educational goals. Ohio's delegation included former Attorney General Betty Montgomery, other representatives from the Office of the Governor, and several State Departments.

Future meetings will include discussions on multi-state goals and initiatives to stem the tide of illegal prescription drugs, as well as ways to efficiently communicate information and resources for the benefit of all citizens. The vision for an inter-state task force grew out of a meeting held earlier this year in Cincinnati between Gov. Kasich and Gov. Steve Beshear of Kentucky.

ODADAS Director Orman Hall has led Ohio's efforts on behalf of the Governor to improve addiction treatment outcomes and work across state systems to ultimately reduce the amount of opiates available for diversion for abuse and addiction. Director Hall commented, "In little more than a decade there's been a 900 percent increase in the use of narcotic pain killers in Ohio. Under Governor Kasich's leadership, Ohio has made significant progress in education, enforcement, and treatment related to opiate abuse."

To date, Ohio has pharmacy data-sharing agreements with both Indiana and Kentucky so that inter-state abuse and diversion can be identified to prevent "doctor-shopping." William T. Winsley, MS, RPh, executive director of the Ohio State Board of Pharmacy said, "It's good to get this process moving because drugs don't stop at state borders."

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