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By Angelo M. Valente

# New Legislation Poised to Create Safer, Healthier New Jersey

 Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey  
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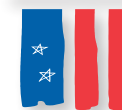
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# UPDATE



Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey  
In Cooperation with the Governor's Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse and the New Jersey Department of Human Services

DRUGS  
DON'T  
WORK  
IN NJ!

Update No. 73

Winter 2015

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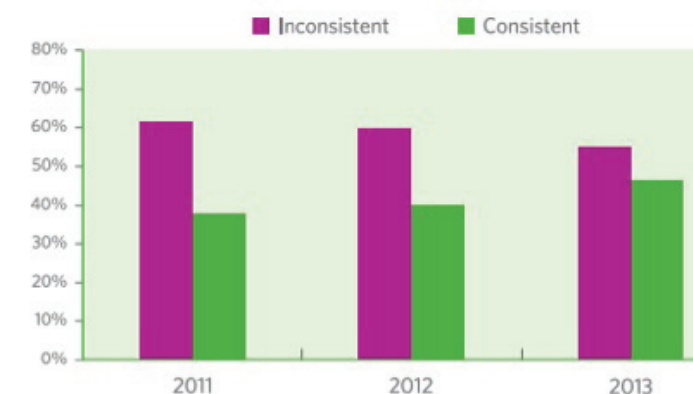
It's impossible to ignore the dark cloud of prescription drug and heroin that has loomed over our state for the last few years. 2013 saw a staggering number of opioid overdose deaths across our state. When all was said and done, two families lost a loved one to this devastating epidemic everyday. In 2014, the Narcan program was launched, which put the lifesaving overdose reversal medication in the hands of law enforcement and first responders, saving hundreds of lives. Now, in 2015, our lawmakers and law enforcement officials are working to establish vital partnerships with treatment facilities to get those who are resuscitated by Narcan the help they need to finally end their addiction.

It is clear that the dark cloud of opioid abuse in New Jersey is clearing with each passing day and we are heading towards a healthier New Jersey.

However, there is still much work to be done in ending the epidemic once and for all. A 2014 study from Quest Diagnostics indicates that nearly 55% of patient tests were shown to be inconsistent. This indicates a misuse of prescription drugs, whether it be intentional or unintentional. We know that misuse of prescription drugs can have drastically negative health effects, many times ending in addiction.

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FIGURE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF PATIENT TEST RESULTS



Source: Quest Diagnostics, January 2011–December 2013

As many of these individuals are actively employed, this widespread problem has a significant impact on a company's bottom line. According to a study released by Generation Rx, about 1 in 5 Americans admit to misusing prescription drugs, many of whom are in the workforce. This results in a staggering \$42 billion dollars in workplace productivity lost each year.

While treatment options and facilities remain effective ways to help those who need help fight their addictions, it does little to prevent the problem in the first place and can still cost a company a great deal in lost productivity. Fortunately, New Jersey's law makers are stepping up to this challenge with a comprehensive 21-piece legislation package designed to curb the tide of this epidemic and continue to march towards a healthy New Jersey.



Source: A Dose of Reality, Generation Rx

The bipartisan package, which was announced in September, came together under the leadership of Senator Joseph Vitale, chair of the Senate Health Committee. The objective of this sweeping legislation is to change the public perception of substance abuse and addiction from a law enforcement issue to a public health issue. Each piece of the package was described in detail in an NJ.com article and is transcribed at the end of this piece.

If passed, these bills will ensure a safer and healthier New Jersey and by proxy, a more productive workplace. We applaud the efforts of our legislators to take these important steps. Of course, we encourage all members of our Drugs Don’t Work Program to continue to evaluate and improve their drug-free workplace policies. However, for now, we are pleased to report that the future looks bright.

LIST OF BILLS  
PART OF 21 PIECE LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE

- S-2366**, sponsored by Senators Weinberg and Vitale, would ensure parents and patients are aware of the dangers of certain prescription drugs by requiring practitioners to inform them of their nature.

**S-2367**, sponsored by Senator Codey, would update New Jersey’s core curriculum on substance abuse to make sure that our students are receiving effective prevention education.

**S-2368**, sponsored by Senator Rice, would increase state funding for substance abuse prevention efforts by \$5 million.

**S-1998\*/A-3129\*\***, sponsored by Senators Weinberg and Vitale/ Assemblymen Conaway and Lagana, Assemblywoman Angelini, Assemblyman Benson and Assemblywoman Sumter, would require all physicians to register for the state Prescription Monitoring Program, which helps identify individuals who are doctor shopping for opiates and would help identify rogue prescribers operating “pill mills.”

**S-2029\***, sponsored by Senators Turner and Vitale, would enhance data collection and resource targeting by government agencies by allowing, with parental permission, for students to participate in voluntary surveys such as anonymous substance abuse surveys.

**S-2369/A-2859\*\***, sponsored by Senators Whelan and Kean/ Assemblymen Eustace and Benson and Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttle, would increase the number of places individuals can drop off unused prescription drugs by expanding “Project Medicine Drop” locations to every State Police barrack, every county sheriff’s office and in county and municipal police departments that chose to participate.

**S-2370/A-709\*\***, sponsored by Senators Whelan and Kyrillos/ Assemblywoman Angelini, Assemblyman Benson and Assemblywoman Sumter, would increase public awareness of safe disposal of prescription drugs by requiring pharmacists and prescribers to notify patients of proper and safe disposal options.

**S-2371**, sponsored by Senator Barnes, would improve our understanding of overdose trends by requiring the state poison control to establish a clearinghouse of drug overdose information.

**S-2372/ A-1436**, sponsored by Senators Madden and Oroho/ Assemblywomen Caride and Mosquera, would create a Statewide Opioid Law Enforcement Task Force to identify, investigate and prosecute illegal sources and distribution of opiate drugs and to provide training for law enforcement, physicians, pharmacists and other health care professionals to detect and divert drug abuses.

**S-2373**, sponsored by Senators Vitale and Addiego, would provide consumers with a better understanding of treatment options by requiring the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to annually compare and rank substance abuse providers.

**S-2374**, sponsored by Senators Vitale and Singer, would increase the rate that Medicaid providers are reimbursed for evidence-based behavioral health care to the going market-rate, which in turn will increase the number of practitioners willing to take Medicaid patients.

- S-2375**, sponsored by Senator Vitale, would remove red tape that keeps ambulatory care facilities from providing behavioral health care services without multiple licenses.

**S-324\*/A-2266\*\***, sponsored by Senator Gordon/ Assemblywoman Vainieri Huttle and Assemblyman Lagana, would create a Behavioral Health Insurance Claim Advocacy Program to provide assistance and advocacy in navigating insurance bureaucracy to those with behavioral health care conditions.

**S-2180\*/A-3450\*\***, sponsored by Senator Gordon/ Assemblywomen Vainieri Huttle and Pinkin, would ensure that those with behavioral health care conditions are eligible through their insurance to receive services prescribed by licensed physicians, physician assistances, psychologists, clinical social workers and certified advance practice nurses by prohibiting insurance companies to deny coverage through their own utilization management review.

**S-2376**, sponsored by Senators Vitale and Gordon, would help doctors coordinate with specialists through telecommunications rather than expensive face-to-face patient visits by creating a grant in the Department of Health to expand remote medical consultations.

**S-2377**, sponsored by Senators Barnes and Vitale, would require New Jersey’s colleges and universities to provide substance abuse recovery housing options.

**S-2047**, sponsored by Senators Kyrillos and Vitale, would ensure that the Department of Human Services have regulatory oversight of substance abuse treatment facilities;
- S-2378**, sponsored by Senators Vitale and Singer, would extend the Overdose Prevention Act to provide immunity to law enforcement professionals for delivery of an overdose antidote and would require all syringe access programs to carry and dispense the antidote to needle exchange participants.

**S-2379**, sponsored by Senators Vitale and Lesniak, would create a three-year pilot program to enroll pre-trial incarcerated individuals in Medicaid, providing more individuals with coverage and eligibility to enroll in court supervised substance abuse treatment programs.

**S-2380**, sponsored by Senators Vitale and Lesniak, would ensure that inmates are receiving treatment approved by the agency with the most appropriate expertise and experience by requiring joint regulatory authority over prison-based mental health and substance abuse programs between the Department of Corrections and the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

**S-2381**, sponsored by Senators Vitale and Lesniak, would permit successful completion of certain drug treatment programs operating in state prisons and prohibition drug court programs for those who are using certain medication assisted treatment such as methadone.
- \*Bills that have been previously introduced in the Senate.

\*\* Bills that have been previously introduced in the General Assembly

Source: NJ.com. ‘N.J. Legislature Tackles Addiction: List Of Bills Included in Major Package’. Web

About the Author  
Angelo M. Valente, Executive Director, Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey

Angelo M. Valente has been the Executive Director of the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey, since its inception in 1992, and has led this organization in becoming the largest continuous Public Service Campaign in New Jersey’s history.

Mr. Valente has recently been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the American Medicine Chest Challenge (AMCC), a national public health initiative to raise awareness of the issue of prescription drug abuse and maintain a National Directory of Permanent Prescription Drug Collection sites. AMCC services over 1,000 community and law enforcement partners in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and three Indian Nations. AMCC is the national affiliate of the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey.

Mr. Valente and the Partnership have been recognized by the White House Office of National Drug-Control Policy, the Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America, the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, and the National Association of Government Communicators for their creative and innovative substance abuse prevention campaigns and initiatives.

He serves as a member of the Holy See’s Delegation to the United Nations, focusing on international drug control strategy.

Angelo holds a Bachelors Degree from Montclair State University; and Master Degrees from Fairleigh Dickinson University in Public Administration and from Seton Hall University in Diplomacy and International Relations.

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