

## NM improves from 49th in the nation to 42nd

Written by Staff Reports  
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### Fewer ODs in New Mexico

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Department of Health announced Dec. 28 that the state's drug overdose death rate improved from 49th worst in the nation to 42nd. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, New Mexico also saw a 7 percent decline in overdose deaths from 2014 to 2015. Meanwhile, overdose deaths increased nationwide by nearly 11 percent.

*"This is an issue that we've been focused on since day one of my administration. While we've made important strides, we still have a lot of work to do," said Governor Susana Martinez. "One overdose death is one too many, which is why we're going to continue doing everything in our power to end this epidemic."*

Curbing drug overdose deaths has been a major priority for Governor Martinez. Earlier this year, the governor signed two pieces of legislation, which takes important steps to prevent drug misuse and combat overdose:

- SB 263 requires practitioners to check the Prescription Monitoring Program database when prescribing opioids. The database allows prescribers and pharmacists to check the controlled substance prescription history of their patients.
- The Governor also signed legislation that increases the availability of naloxone, a medication that reverses opioid overdoses. Medicaid claims for naloxone among outpatient pharmacies in New Mexico increased 83 percent between the first three months (January-March) and the

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second three months (April-June) of 2016.

In addition, the Department of Health and the Human Services Department announced in September that it had secured more than \$11 million in grants to reduce opioid-related deaths, strengthen prevention efforts, and improve opioid surveillance data. DOH's Epidemiology and Response Division also received two grants from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, totaling \$3.7 million over three years to aid in preventing prescription drug overdoses and to enhance tracking and reporting of overdoses; this is in addition to \$3.4 million received in September 2015 over four years for preventing prescription drug overdoses.

*"Over the course of this administration, we've been working hard to address this serious issue. This improvement shows that we've made progress, but we are still behind the national rate,"* said Department of Health Secretary Lynn Gallagher.

*"Our goal is to have the fewest possible overdose deaths. And until we achieve this, we're going to continue doing all we can to address the issue with our partners."*

NMDOH continues to work to improve prescribing practices with measurable improvements being seen recently:

- The number of opioid prescriptions by health care providers decreased during the past year by 7.2 percent.
- The number of patients with overlapping opioid prescriptions from more than one provider decreased by 16 percent in the past year, and the number of patients with overlapping opioid and benzodiazepine prescriptions decreased by 14.2 percent.
- The number of patients prescribed opioids for over three months had healthcare providers who checked the New Mexico Board of Pharmacy's Prescription Monitoring Program at least once increased 20.1 percent over the last year.

NMDOH also continues to promote the use of Medication Assisted Treatment, which includes use of methadone or buprenorphine/naloxone, while HSD has greatly expanded availability of

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