



*Commonwealth of Virginia*  
*Office of the Governor*

## *Executive Order*

### **NUMBER FORTY-FOUR (2019)**

#### **CONTINUATION OF THE GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COMMISSION ON OPIOIDS AND ADDICTION**

##### **Importance of the Initiative**

The disease of addiction is devastating our communities and taking the lives of too many Virginians. Since 2013, drug overdoses have been the leading cause of unnatural death in the Commonwealth. Nearly 1,500 individuals in Virginia died as a result of drug overdoses just last year. Of those nearly 1,500 fatalities, over 80 percent involved prescription opioid painkillers, heroin, or synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Opioid and heroin abuse continues to pose an immense public health and safety threat to Virginians and remains a public health emergency for the Commonwealth.

In addition to opioids and heroin, data shows that abuse of other potentially deadly drugs, particularly stimulants, is on the rise. In addition to maintaining a focus on opioids, Virginia's leaders must also focus on the biological, psychological, and social factors that foster addiction in an individual so that those factors can be addressed and mitigated. The disease of addiction is not exclusive to any substance and addiction will always find another drug.

Virginia cannot solve these problems through state intervention alone. The knowledge and experiences of providers, peers, local leadership, and other community partners is imperative as we work to reduce the impact of addiction and reduce the number of those who die from it. Under the authority established by Executive Directive Nine (2016), the Governor's Executive Leadership Team on Opioids and Addiction implements strategies, programs, and policies aimed at reducing overdose deaths. It is necessary to look to our partners to strengthen our understanding of the issue and share learned successes. Therefore, I direct relevant secretariats, agencies, health and behavioral health providers and organizations, education professionals, law enforcement, and other stakeholders to continue working together to identify and execute strategies to increase harm reduction opportunities, intensify prevention activities, enhance access to evidence-based treatment, and support individuals in recovery in Virginia.

## **Key Objectives**

This advisory commission shall provide comments to the co-chairs of the Governor's Executive Leadership Team on Opioids and Addiction regarding the development of policies, programs, and other initiatives designed to impact the ongoing drug overdose epidemic in Virginia.

The advisory commission shall meet upon the call of the co-chairs. The co-chairs shall call the advisory commission to meet no less than twice per year. At such meeting, the Executive Leadership Team on Opioids and Addiction shall provide updates and metrics regarding opioid and addiction initiatives. Therefore, supplemental meetings may be held to review specific topics, initiatives, and programs.

The advisory commission shall provide a final report to the Governor including recommendations to address the opioid and addiction crisis in the Commonwealth.

## **Continuation of the Opioid and Addiction Commission**

Accordingly, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor under Article V of the Constitution of Virginia under the laws of the Commonwealth, including, but not limited to §§ 2.2-134 and 2.2-135 of the *Code of Virginia*, and subject to my continuing and ultimate authority and responsibility to act in such matters, I hereby extend the Governor's Advisory Commission on Opioids and Addiction (Opioid and Addiction Commission).

The Opioid and Addiction Commission will serve in a consultative role, in accordance with § 2.2-2100 of the *Code of Virginia*, and will be responsible for advising the Governor's Executive Leadership Team on Opioids and Addiction and providing guidance on the following initiatives related to addressing the opioid and addiction public health emergency in the Commonwealth:

- a. Building the capacity of Virginia's communities to address the addiction epidemic through community mobilization and coalition development;
- b. Limiting availability of prescription opioids for misuse;
- c. Establishing pathways to treatment and recovery supports in Virginia;
- d. Establishing operational comprehensive harm reduction programs in Virginia; and
- e. Developing model protocols for Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) for individuals being released from correctional settings that local/regional jails and community services boards can use.

**Composition of the Opioid and Addiction Commission**

The Opioid and Addiction Commission’s membership shall be appointed by the Governor. The Secretaries of Health and Human Resources and Public Safety and Homeland Security will co-chair the Opioid and Addiction Commission. Membership for the Opioid and Addiction Commission will be composed of representatives from the Office of the Attorney General, the General Assembly, and the judiciary, as well as community leaders in prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery, including individuals with lived experiences. The Governor may appoint any other person(s) deemed necessary and proper to carry out the assigned functions.

The Secretariat of Health and Human Resources shall provide a Staff Director to support the Opioid and Addiction Commission. The Secretariats of Public Safety and Homeland Security and Health and Human Resources shall provide other staff support as necessary. An estimated 100 hours of staff time will be required to support the work of the Opioid and Addiction Commission.

**Effective Date**

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and, pursuant to §§ 2.2-134 and 2.2-135 of the *Code of Virginia*, shall remain in full force and effect for a year from its signing, unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 25<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2019.



  
Ralph S. Northam, Governor

Attest:

  
Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth