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Governor Ron DeSantis Announces New Opioid Recovery Program in Florida

ROCKLEDGE, Fla. – Today, Governor Ron DeSantis was joined by Florida health officials to announce the expansion of a new, piloted substance abuse and recovery network to disrupt the opioid epidemic. The network of addiction care – Coordinated Opioid Recovery (CORE) – is the first of its kind in the nation, coordinated through the Department of Health, Department of Children and Families, and the Agency for Health Care Administration. Governor DeSantis also announced the appointment of Dr. Courtney Phillips as the first Statewide Director of Opioid Recovery. For more information, click [here](#).

“Biden’s border crisis has caused a massive infusion of drugs coming into our state,” said **Governor Ron DeSantis**. “This year we increased the penalties for individuals trafficking drugs in our state, and now we are giving Floridians the tools they need to break the substance abuse cycle. Substance abuse can affect any family at any time, so from education to law enforcement to treatment we are going to make sure that Floridians can take advantage of this new addiction recovery model.”

“It is so vital for individuals contending with a substance use disorder to have access to the right array of services that will work for their individual needs,” said **Department of Children and Families Secretary Shevaun Harris**. “When agencies, stakeholders, and partners alike come together to bolster our state’s system of care, we can ensure that Floridians have access to comprehensive services when they need it most. Today’s announcement of the implementation of the CORE Network model throughout the state is yet another example of how the DeSantis administration is leveraging our state’s resources to help families move forward with dignity on their journey of recovery.”

“Addiction is heartbreaking for all involved, and we ultimately want to help people address the stress traumas that led them to addiction,” said **State Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo**. “One day the standard of care will address the trauma and the stress, but until then we have the evidence-based practices that exist in place. This program is an applied, intensive application to managing addiction through powerful, effective practice that connects people to what they need to get out of the horrific cycle of addiction.”

“Substance use disorder is a chronic, life-threatening, and relapsing disease that needs to be treated like all other chronic diseases with medical and subspecialty expertise,” said **Florida Department of Health Deputy Secretary for Health Dr. Kenneth Scheppke**. “Launching CORE will create a sustained system of care to manage the complex medical needs of these patients and bring lasting recovery and good health.”

“I understand the struggle on a more personal level – today I am over 4 years sober,” said **Haven House Peer Recovery Coach Justin Perse**. “At a young age I was sexually abused and did not know how to deal with this mental burden. My mom never gave up on me, and her prayers paid off. I was put in touch with a wonderful couple who let me into their home, and then I was in a faith based program to become the best version of myself. I want to lead people and guide them through the pitfalls of alcohol and addiction, it’s only by His grace that I am here today.”

As the Statewide Director of Opioid Recovery, Dr. Courtney Phillips will provide support for the behavioral health system. Dr. Phillips will offer clinical consultations for addicts seeking treatment and recovery services. She is an adult psychologist who currently serves as the Director of Behavioral Health for the Health Care District of Palm Beach County.

"The state of Florida should be proud today to take the lead on systematically tackling the opioid and substance use epidemic with compassion and competent care," said **Statewide Director of Opioid Recovery Dr. Courtney Phillips**. "Our state and communities did not choose this epidemic, but today we choose to treat this medical and psychiatric illness like any other, with access, evidence based care, and lifelong comprehensive treatment."

In 2022, there have already been nearly 2,000 fatal overdoses in Florida. In Brevard County, law enforcement is seizing more illicit drugs than ever before, especially fentanyl. Last year, the Brevard County Sheriff’s Office, with the Central Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Team, saw a 72% increase in drug overdose fatalities related to fentanyl.

This program was successfully piloted in Palm Beach County for nearly two years and will be expanding in up to twelve counties to break the overdose cycle. Floridians battling with addiction can utilize CORE for stabilization and to receive medical assisted treatment that is specialized to sustain a clean pathway to success. CORE will be expanded in two phases. Phase one counties include Brevard, Clay, Duval, Escambia, Gulf, Manatee, Marion, Pasco, and Volusia counties.

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