



Department of Justice

**United States Attorney Bruce D. Brandler
Middle District of Pennsylvania**

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U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE ISSUES OPIOID STRATEGY TO COMBAT HEROIN EPIDEMIC IN THE MIDDLE DISTRICT

HARRISBURG – The United States Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Pennsylvania announced today that it issued a district specific opioid strategy to address the prescription opioid and heroin epidemic plaguing our nation and the Middle District of Pennsylvania. United States Attorney Bruce D. Brandler stated, "more Americans now die every year from drug overdoses than they do in motor vehicle crashes or homicides and Pennsylvania has the eighth highest rate of overdose deaths in the United States. Our office is committed to doing everything we can to address this growing problem."

On September 21, 2016, the Department of Justice issued its national strategy to combat the rising public health challenges caused by the abuse of prescription opioids and the concomitant heroin epidemic engulfing our nation. Although prescription opioid and heroin abuse is a national problem that requires a national strategy, the Department of Justice recognizes that its efforts must be tailored to the needs of each region and implemented by those who know their communities best. Accordingly, the opioid strategy memorandum issued today is the Middle District's strategy to combat this epidemic.

According to United States Attorney Bruce D. Brandler, the Middle District's strategy rests on three interrelated pillars: prevention, enforcement and treatment. In the area of prevention, the U.S. Attorney's Office will continue its efforts to raise public awareness by developing a community education plan which will not only incorporate some of the office's prior community outreach activities (such as the heroin and prescription drug symposium held on September 19, 2016) but will also add new features such as creating a formal multi-media presentation highlighting the dangers and warning signs of opioid abuse and offer tangible solutions. The presentations will be made throughout the Middle District by experienced prosecutors, law enforcement officers, medical professionals and other appropriate individuals to schools, businesses, civic organizations, and prisoners soon to be released into the community

In the area of enforcement, United States Attorney Brandler stated, "opioid cases, particularly opioid cases resulting in death, will take the highest priority and such cases will be prosecuted aggressively to ensure maximum deterrence. This not only includes prosecuting the

members of drug trafficking organizations but also includes rogue health care providers, pharmacists and pharmaceutical employees who contribute to the available supply and overuse of prescription opioid painkillers.”

In the area of treatment, United States Attorney Brandler stated, “we will coordinate with our federal, state and local law enforcement partners to identify individuals most in need of treatment and direct those individuals to appropriate treatment providers and facilities at the earliest time.”

Gary Tuggle, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) Philadelphia Field Division stated, “in addition to our investigations and enforcement actions against drug traffickers responsible for the illegal diversion of prescription opioids and distribution of heroin, awareness, prevention, and ready access to treatment are equally as important in addressing this public health crisis. 3,383 people died across Pennsylvania last year from drug overdoses, the majority of which were attributable to heroin and opioids. The DEA looks forward to working closely with U.S. Attorney Brandler and his office on this strategy to address this epidemic.”

Michael Harpster, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI’s Philadelphia Division stated, “every day, the FBI and our law enforcement partners are working to disrupt the supply chain that feeds this heroin and opioid epidemic. Despite significant success, the demand for these drugs continues unabated. Only through a strong, concerted effort will we gain any ground in this fight, by both targeting traffickers and raising public awareness about addiction, treatment, and prevention.”

Details concerning the Middle District’s opioid strategy can be found in the memorandum itself which is attached to this news release.

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