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Contact: Jessica Diaz  
jdiaz@patersonnj.gov



**MAYOR SAYEGH, ATTORNEY GENERAL GREWAL, CONGRESSMAN PASCRELL  
ANNOUNCE GRANT FOR “OPIOID RESPONSE TEAM” IN PATERSON**

PATERSON – New Jersey Attorney General Gurbir S. Grewal, Paterson Mayor Andre Sayegh, and Congressman Bill Pascrell today announced a federal award of \$149,999.80 to pilot a comprehensive opioid abuse program in Paterson, which will include the creation of an Opioid Response Team (“ORT”). The ORT will comprise of one police officer, one EMS worker, and one case worker - or Substance Abuse Recovery Advocate (“SARA”) - who will be “on-call” at all times to focus on Paterson’s addicted population.

“We know that the minutes and hours after an overdose, an arrest, or another drug-related crisis offer drug users an important opportunity to get the help they need to turn their lives around,” said Attorney General Grewal. “These Opioid Response Teams will be trained to spring into action at a moment’s notice, day or night, to ensure that drug users experiencing a crisis know that the door to treatment and recovery support services is always open.”

“In addition to responding to emergencies, the members of Paterson’s ORT will also work proactively to tackle this ongoing crisis in our community,” noted Mayor Andre Sayegh. “This includes having members of the ORT patrolling on foot and by car opioid/open-air markets to identify those who may be in need of rehabilitation services, as well as distributing educational materials outlining available services individuals can access. The ultimate goal is to disrupt the cycle of addiction before an overdose or arrest.”

Passaic County’s 2016 New Jersey Drug and Alcohol Abuse Treatment Report shows that while Paterson only comprises 29% of the County’s population overall, it accounts for 49% of all drug treatment admissions and 50% of all heroin and opioid treatment admissions countywide. Among Paterson’s drug admissions, 51.5% were specifically for an opiate addiction.

“I am proud to have fought for close to \$750,000 in funding from the Department of Justice to institute these programs throughout New Jersey,” said Congressman Bill Pascrell. “This funding combines two essential strategies - training for first responders in de-escalation techniques and how to interact with individuals with opioid addiction issues, and the inclusion of case workers who can use their expertise to shepherd individuals to treatment that can break the cycle of addiction.”

“As opioids devastate communities across our state, I am grateful that this innovative, response team approach is coming to Paterson,” said Senator Nellie Pou (D-Bergen/Passaic). “In the Legislature we have pursued legislation that limits access to opioids and expands access to Narcan but in the frightening minutes of an overdose, what matters is time. This response team has the potential to save hundreds of lives in our community and be a model for response teams around the state.”

“Cities throughout the state are fighting opioid addiction in their communities; the City of Paterson among them. We can do more to help residents but only with the right resources in place. This grant and the ability to forge an Opioid Response Team focused within the Paterson Police Department is one of those resources,” said Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly (D-Bergen/Passaic). “We welcome the support from the NJ Attorney General’s office today through this grant and look forward to seeing the difference it will make in the city.”

Others joining at the announcement included Passaic County Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes; Paterson Public Safety Director Jerry Speziale; Paterson Fire Chief Brian McDermott; ORT project director, Sgt. Todd Pearl, Paterson Police Department Administrative Services Bureau; St. Joseph’s University Medical Center CEO Kevin Slavin; Eva’s Village EVP for Development & External Relations Heather Thompson.

Other cities receiving grant funding to create ORTs are Newark, Camden, Trenton, and Toms River.

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