SUPPORTS

A.2253-A/S3383-B (Rosenthal/Hinchey)

An act to amend the public health law, in relation to authorizing and establishing a training program for paramedics for the administration of buprenorphine

The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO supports the above-mentioned legislation, which seeks to expand the scope of practice for paramedics to include the administration of medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder. This legislation represents a crucial step forward in addressing the opioid crisis and improving access to life-saving interventions for patients who have experienced an opioid overdose or have a reported history of chronic opioid use.

The opioid epidemic continues to ravage communities across the country, claiming thousands of lives each year. It is imperative that we equip our emergency responders with the tools and authority they need to effectively intervene and save lives. By authorizing paramedics to administer buprenorphine, this bill will enable them to provide patients with more comprehensive and timely care, as well as a bridge to recovery resources.

This approach would encourage adoption of a life-saving therapy by historically underserved patients who frequently decline transport to a hospital, and who may not otherwise be engaged in care. In particular, this harm reduction strategy would address disparities in health care delivery for rural populations who typically have far less access to medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD).[1]

Local response teams are prepared for implementation of this program. The NYS Emergency Medical Advisory Committee and the State Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Council approved a program to initiate buprenorphine administration by EMS providers in the prehospital setting in January 2023.[2] Through this program, patients with documented chronic opioid use or those who have undergone an opioid overdose necessitating naloxone administration and also display symptoms of opioid withdrawal, qualify for treatment. Under such policy, the EMS provider provides counseling on the advantages of buprenorphine and with patient consent, will reach out to a physician for authorization to administer buprenorphine. Additionally, follow-up care would be organized through the NYS Department of Health affiliated program, Medication for Addiction and Electronic Referrals (MATTERS). MATTERS supports patients in their ongoing care and recovery by connecting them with physicians, and other critical resources such as peer support and transportation.

Expanding the scope of practice for paramedics aligns with evidence-based approaches to addressing the opioid crisis. Similar programs implemented in New Jersey, Texas, and California are seeing remarkable success: one study found that delivering buprenorphine via EMS was associated with a nearly six-fold increase in the odds of engagement with substance use disorder treatment (i.e., visiting a substance use disorder clinic) within 30 days of an overdose-related EMS encounter.[3]

If enacted, this legislation would permit EMS to administer buprenorphine prescriptions to eligible individuals providing a vital opportunity to strengthen our response to the opioid crisis and ensure care for people with opioid use disorder. NYSACHO strongly supports such legislation and recommends it is introduced and swiftly passed into law.

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[1] Rural Communities Opioid Response Program – Technical Assistance. (2024, April 19). *Rural-Urban Disparities in The Availability of Hospital-Based Screening, Medications for Opioid Use Disorder, and Addiction Consult Services*. https://www.rcorp-ta.org/resources/rural-urban-disparities-availability-hospital-based-screening-medications-opioid-use-disorder-and-addiction-consult-services

[2] Dailey, MW, Hallinan, K, Lynch, J. (2024, March 24). *Commentary: A simple change in state law could bring more opioid users into treatment*. MATTERS Network. https://mattersnetwork.org/paramedics-opioid-treatment-0324/

[3] Solomon, K. (2023, January 10). *Reaching people where they are–using EMS to start buprenorphine*. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. https://opioidprinciples.jhsph.edu/reaching-people-where-they-are-using-ems-to-start-buprenorphine/