



SUPPORTS

A7411/S7818 (Jones/Baskin)

AN ACT to amend the county law, in relation to permitting the commissioner of health to designate local health officials to request copies of certain reports and records

NYSACHO supports the above-referenced legislation, which would allow the State Commissioner of Health to designate local health officials to receive coroner/medical examiner reports for the purposes of public health surveillance and interventions.

The United States is facing a worsening overdose epidemic, with opioid-related deaths rising from 49,860 in 2019 to 81,806 in 2022 according to the CDC. Two US Surgeon Generals released reports and advisories attempting to address the opioid epidemic. The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics identifies New York State as remaining in the top 5 states with recorded overdose-related deaths since 2015. New York State reported 6,358 overdose-related deaths in 2022 and a high death rate of 31.4 according to the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics. The New York State Prevention Agenda 2019-2024: New York State's Health Improvement Plan includes substance use disorder prevention as a priority focus area for state and local action.

County coroners and medical examiners are directed to make inquiry into unattended and unnatural deaths, including overdose deaths, within their county under New York State County Law 671. The New York State Commissioner of Health or their designee has the right to request all copies of reports and records related to a death, including, but not limited to, autopsy reports and toxicology reports under New York State County Law 677 and Public Health Law 206 (d). County coroners and medical examiners must provide records and reports to various authorities including the commissioner of health, the district attorney, the commissioner of mental health, and others under New York State County Law 677.

Local health departments mandated core public health work includes reducing preventable injury and death. For the purpose of public health surveillance activities, local health departments require access to information and data to monitor trends illnesses, injuries and deaths in their jurisdiction. Access to timely local data will allow local health departments to better develop and target evidence-based public health interventions to reduce injury and death due to the current overdose epidemic. Currently, the New York State County Law 677 does not include a provision allowing local health departments to request all reports and records related to a death within their county, nor allow coroners and medical examiners to

provide that information, which is a barrier to public health responses to injury and deaths caused by overdoses.

Public health law provides the Commissioner of Health with supervisory oversight of local health officials and local health departments and allows them to regularly assign public health statutory responsibilities to local health departments as their designee. Allowing the Commissioner of Health to assign local health officials as designees under County Law 677 assures appropriate oversight that requests for data are aligned with official purposes of the state department of health and public health surveillance activities.

Understanding the causes of preventable overdose deaths will allow for better public health response and save lives. NYSACHO strongly supports this legislation and recommends it be enacted into law.

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