



Media Release

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Chesapeake Employers Supports DHMH's Efforts to Combat Opioid Overdose, Abuse in Maryland with \$750,000 Gift

(TOWSON, Md.) — In a show of unity, a workers' compensation insurance company and a Maryland State Agency are joining forces to combat a drug problem that is plaguing every corner of the state: Opioid addiction and overdose. Chesapeake Employers' Insurance Company is giving the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene \$750,000 over the span of three years to strengthen DHMH's efforts to combat opioid overdose and abuse in Maryland.

"Chesapeake Employers wishes to support DHMH in its opioid abuse prevention efforts by providing a monetary gift to the department for its use in bolstering the state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) and other efforts designed to stop the opioid epidemic in Maryland," said Tom Phelan, President and CEO of Chesapeake Employers' Insurance Company. "Many injured workers get prescribed opioid pain killers to deal with the immense suffering that occurs from serious injuries. The problem occurs when some of the injured workers get addicted to these drugs. Opioid addiction prevents workers from returning to gainful employment, adversely affects families and home finances, and potentially harms children who find and use prescribed opioid painkillers meant for someone else. Furthermore, opioid addiction can lead to heroin use. This is a serious problem that negatively impacts all the citizens in Maryland."

According to the formal agreement, Chesapeake Employers will provide the money as a gift in three installments of \$250,000 for fiscal years 2016, 2017 and 2018.



Pictured are Thomas Phelan, President and CEO of Chesapeake Employers Insurance; Health and Mental Hygiene Secretary Van T. Mitchell; and Vice President of Legal Services for Chesapeake Employers Carmine D'Alessandro.

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Page 2 of 2

Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs

Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) are state-run electronic databases used to collect information on the prescribing and dispensing of controlled prescription drugs to patients. As described by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), PDMPs are designed to allow healthcare practitioners and other users to access information to assist in identifying suspected abuse or channeling drugs into illegal use, and can give a prescriber or pharmacist critical information regarding a patient's controlled substance prescription history. This information can help prescribers and pharmacists identify high-risk patients who would benefit from early interventions or changes to their medical care.

"PDMPs continue to be among the most promising state-level interventions to improve painkiller prescribing, inform clinical practice, and protect patients at risk," according to the CDC.

"This donation to the State is representative of a cross-sector partnership geared toward strengthening the response to the heroin/opioid epidemic, which is affecting every segment of Maryland," said Health and Mental Hygiene Secretary Van T. Mitchell. "We encourage anyone in need of help to call our crisis hotline at 1-800-422-0009."

Opioid Abuse Facts

National scope: Every year more than 16,500 people die from prescription opioid-related drug overdose, more than from heroin and cocaine combined. The more than fourfold increase in opioid overdose deaths parallels the fourfold increase in sales of these drugs over the past decade, according to the CDC. The CDC's finding also concluded that 45 percent of people who used heroin were also addicted to prescription opioid painkillers.

Maryland scope: The narcotic pain relievers oxycodone, hydrocodone, tramadol, Oxycontin, and Morphine Sulfate are among the most frequently prescribed medications for chronic pain among injured workers today, according to Chesapeake Employers' claims statistics. Nowhere is this problem of narcotics overuse more evident than in the field of workers' compensation.

According to statistics published by DHMH in May 2015, 887 or 85.7 percent of all intoxication deaths that occurred in Maryland in 2014 were opioid-related. Opioid-related deaths included those related to heroin, prescription opioids, and nonpharmaceutical fentanyl. The number of opioid-related deaths increased by 22 percent between 2013 and 2014, and by 76 percent between 2010 and 2014.

About Chesapeake Employers' Insurance Company

Chesapeake Employers' Insurance Company is Maryland's largest writer of workers' compensation insurance. It is a nonprofit, non-stock, private corporation. Formerly known as IWIF, Chesapeake Employers has served as a continuous, guaranteed source for fairly priced workers' compensation insurance since 1914.

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