The following is a compendium of news reports over the past month that may be of interest to our AG offices who are dealing with substance abuse issues. Neither the National Association of Attorneys General nor the National Attorneys General Training & Research Institute expresses a view as to the accuracy of news accounts, nor as to the position expounded by the authors of the hyperlinked articles.

SEPTEMBER 2014

New Developments in Combatting Prescription Drug Abuse

Kentucky Attorney General Jack Conway and Kentucky First Lady Jane Beshear presented ceremonial checks to Ramey-Estep Homes and Pathways, Inc., two of the substance abuse facilities which will receive funding through the KY Kids Recovery Grant Program. The two will provide similar checks to additional grant recipients, the Children’s Home of Northern Kentucky and NECCO, later this week. All programs were selected because they provide evidence-based substance abuse services for adolescents, including residential and outpatient services.

Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto and Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval have announced the development of a video contest for middle and high school students. Video submissions should help to educate students and inform parents and teachers of the dangers of substance abuse. For more information, click on this link.

New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman announced that Deborah Cleveland, a former medication technician at an elderly nursing facility in Rochester, has pled guilty to Attempted Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, in connection to charges that she stole approximately 650 prescription narcotics from eight elderly patients and attempted to conceal the theft through by substituting pills that had a similar appearance.

Recently, authorities in Delaware authorities have warned citizens of tablets that appear to contain Oxycodone but actually contain a potentially fatal dose of heroin. A similar alert was issued in New Jersey.

Consumer Reports published an article detailing the risks of prescription opiates and over the counter pain medications. In the article, the publication also called on the FDA to take more action to address dangers related to dosing instructions.

A study recently published by HealthDay, based on a survey of approximately 2,300 high school seniors, shows that the number of high school athletes that abuse painkillers has risen over the past year, with football players being the most likely to abuse these drugs.
Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick signed S2142 into law. The new law, which had bipartisan support, is evidence based and requires insurers to pay for at least two weeks of inpatient care for acutely addicted patients and prohibits insurers from requiring preauthorization. The law also adds new prescription drug monitoring program data reporting requirements, authorizes the state public health commissioner to classify a drug as “dangerous” for up to a year if it meets certain requirements, and mandates that a commission compile a list of opiate substitutes.

Pennsylvania has instituted new emergency room opioid prescribing guidelines, which mandate that providers should not prescribe oxycodone, methadone, or extended-release morphine without consulting with the patient’s primary care physician and also recommend that emergency room physicians limit the number of prescriptions of short-acting opioids to a week’s supply. These guidelines are similar to those adopted in 2012 by the American College of Emergency Physicians.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will provide $1 million to states including West Virginia, Oklahoma and Kentucky over the next three years in order to enhance the states’ prescription drug monitoring programs, through the Prescription Drug Overdose: Boost for State Prevention.

The DEA published a rule that would place hydrocodone combination products, like Vicodin, in Schedule II. Currently, Schedule II opioids include such drugs as fentanyl and oxycodone.

United States Senators Sherrod Brown (OH) and Ed Markey (MA) are sponsoring The Expanded Opportunity for Substance Abuse Treatment Act, which would amend the Drug Addiction Treatment Act, which limits prescribers of buprenorphine and other opioid addiction medicines to 100 patients per year. Doctors who completed certain addiction treatment training and obtained proper licensure would be allowed to seek a waiver of the 100 patient limit. This article outlines the current debate surrounding this issue.

Developments in the Fight against Heroin Abuse

Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine has launched a pilot program in Toledo which establishes two victim advocate-clinical positions that will assist addicts immediately after overdose. According to the article, the goal of the program is to “fill gaps in assistance” for survivors immediately after overdose and following treatment.

Pennsylvania Attorney General Kathleen G. Kane announced the arrest of 11 individuals, who have been charged with distributing heroin, cocaine, and opioid prescription drugs. The arrests are the result of an ongoing investigation that is being handled by the Attorney General and Blair County, Pennsylvania, District Attorney Richard Consiglio. General Kane also testified at the fourth of a series of hearings held by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, entitled “Heroin: Combatting This Growing Epidemic in Rural Pennsylvania.”
Rhode Island Attorney General Peter F. Kilmartin announced that Rafael Galvez was sentenced to 18 years in prison, with eight to serve and the remainder suspended with probation, in connection with charges that Galvez was engaged in a large scale heroin and fentanyl distribution ring.

A Newark, New Jersey, grandmother was arrested after she was allegedly observed snorting heroin as she rode a public bus with her seven-year-old granddaughter. In Louisiana, a couple was arrested after police officers found them passed out in their car, in the presence of their two children, due to an apparent heroin overdose.

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome

A recent study explored how the exposure to opioids may alter expression of a gene that “plays an important role in opioid dependent adults.” The results, which are published in the *Journal of Pediatrics*, indicated that children exposed to opioids in utero may potentially have “future issues and sensitivities around opioid and other addictive substances.”

A $1 million grant from BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee will be used to build a treatment unit for drug-dependent babies at East Tennessee Children’s Hospital in Knoxville. Last year, 921 babies were born with neonatal abstinence syndrome in Tennessee.

Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC, located in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, has opened an out-patient recovery center for pregnant women addicted to opiates. Developers hail the center as the “first-of-its-kind.” The center will utilize buprenorphine treatment and provide “consistent, collaborative care throughout the patient’s pregnancy.”

Hot Topics Relating to Synthetic Cannabinoids

Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi recently met with state law enforcement to discuss the “changing landscape” of synthetic drugs found in stores within the state. General Bondi took this opportunity to warn parents of the dangers of synthetic drugs, specifically, that children too often do not understand what it is that they are ingesting. General Bondi also noted that synthetic drugs now are available in liquid form for use in electronic cigarettes.

New Hampshire Governor Maggie Hassan declared a state of emergency in New Hampshire after approximately 44 overdoses were linked to the ingestion of “Smacked,” a particular form of synthetic marijuana that is not currently outlawed under existing legislation. New Hampshire Attorney General Joseph Foster urged store owners to voluntarily remove the item from their stock. Recently, General Foster spoke to a state legislative committee that is now facing the difficult question of how to draft laws that adequately outlaw synthetic marijuana. General Foster stated, “I think the biggest challenge is
to define the substance that is illegal…[a]nd they change from time to time, so it’s difficult for law enforcement to keep up with it.”

The United States Treasury has frozen the assets of Eric Chang, who is accused of using his company, CEC Limited, to manufacture synthetic drugs. CEC Limited, which is based in Shanghai, would then ship the drugs to the United States.

**Updates in the Field of Marijuana Legalization**

Colorado’s Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) recently published an extensive report which examines the impact of the legalization of marijuana on the state. It can be accessed at this [link](#).

According to research presented at this year’s annual American Psychological Association meeting, the use of marijuana once a week by teens and young adults can lead to cognitive decline, poor attention and memory, and a decreased IQ.

A Georgia legislative study committee is considering permitting parents of children who suffer from seizure disorders to purchase cannabis oil for treatment. A similar bill had previously been drafted, but the legislature never voted on it.

A recent study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* claims that medical marijuana laws are associated with lower opioid mortality rates by state. However, the UF Drug Policy Institute has published a [brief](#) that calls for a re-analysis of the data.

**Other News of Interest**

President Obama announced his intent to nominate Michael P. Botticelli, Acting Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), for the position of ONDCP Director.

California is considering a proposal which will require doctors to undergo random drug and alcohol testing, with the results being reported to the California Medical Board. The hotly-contested proposal, known as Proposition 46, will be considered by voters in November.

Six Philadelphia narcotics officers are under federal indictment, accused of robbery, extortion, kidnapping, and drug dealing. The indictment, which details crimes which allegedly occurred between 2006 and 2012, accuses the officers of robbing drug dealers, falsifying reports to conceal the theft of drug proceeds, and other corrupt activities.

United State House Representatives Elizabeth Esty (CT), Bill Foster (IL) and Sean Patrick Maloney (NY) introduced the [Expanding Opportunities for Recovery Act](#), a bill that will [expand the availability](#) of in-
patient substance abuse rehabilitation through Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grants.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has drafted two “quick guides” for use at substance abuse treatment facilities in order to better address the specific needs of women – one for administrators and one for clinicians.

Francesca Liquori is the Editor of Substance Abuse News and may be reached at 202-326-6041. Substance Abuse News is a publication of the National Association of Attorneys General. Any use and/or copies of this newsletter in whole or part must include the customary bibliographic citation. NAAG retains copyright and all other intellectual property rights in the material presented in this publication. NAAG, 2030 M Street, NW, Eighth Floor, Washington, DC 20036 (202) 326-6000 | http://www.naag.org/