



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Continues Fight Against
Substance Use Disorder Across the Commonwealth**
Announces New Interagency Substance Use Response Team

Harrisburg, PA – Today, Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Secretary Jen Smith joined Liberty Mid Atlantic High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) to discuss the need to expand our lens of focus from opioids to fighting overall substance use disorder with the increase of polysubstance and stimulant use across the commonwealth.

“Throughout the past year and a half, the Wolf Administration has been able to reevaluate our role in combatting substance use disorder,” said DDAP Secretary Jen Smith. “With the increase in polysubstance use and stimulants across the commonwealth, we have recommitted ourselves to tackling substance use disorder as a whole with the goal of offsetting the devastating increase in overdose deaths.”

Part of this recommitment is the transition from the Opioid Command Center (OCC) to the Interagency Substance Use Response Team— a new tool for collaboration across state government to combat the disease of addiction. In replacing the current OCC structure, this newly established group will shift its focus from solely opioids to all SUDs due to the increase in polysubstance use, stimulant use, and additional SUDs emerging in Pennsylvania.

This group will serve as a platform to make informed decisions with the goal of resolving policy, media, procedural, and/or funding matters in relation to SUD and the addiction crisis across the commonwealth. The overarching goals of this group will remain fairly consistent with the OCC Strategic Plans goals of prevention, rescue, treatment, recovery, sustainability; however, specific focus on these goals will be looked at through the lens of [DDAP's existing strategic plan](#) goals of reducing stigma, intensifying primary prevention, strengthening the drug and alcohol treatment system, and empowering sustained recovery.

“Given the increased overdose deaths in 2020, the substance use and mental health challenges COVID-19 has exacerbated, and the ending of the opioid disaster

declaration in 2021, our resolve to address the crisis remains unchanged,” said Smith. “However, this moment in time gives us the opportunity to improve upon what we learned and adjust our strategy accordingly.”

The creation of the Opioid Command Center was the result of the Opioid Disaster Emergency Declaration signed by Governor Wolf in January 2018. Since its creation, the Opioid Command Center has continued to bring together personnel from 17 state agencies and the Office of the Attorney General, spearheaded by the Department of Health (DOH) and DDAP. Through the collaborative effort of the command center, the Wolf Administration has been able to break down decade-long silos across agencies and work together to make a positive impact on Pennsylvanians struggling with opioid use disorder.

To learn more about DDAP’s efforts in combatting substance use disorder, visit ddap.pa.gov.

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