

STATE OF VERMONT

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 05-21

[Decriminalized Buprenorphine Task Force]

WHEREAS, since taking office, the Governor has demonstrated commitment to providing access to opiate addiction treatment for individuals in need; and

WHEREAS, through hard work and partnership among state, local and community partners, the state can now quickly meet the demand for opiate addiction treatment services in all 14 counties; and

WHEREAS, Vermont is nationally recognized for its collaborative “hub and spoke” system of treatment for opiate addiction; and

WHEREAS, the Governor remains committed to building upon the progress of previous administrations in this area by re-focusing efforts in the areas of education and prevention, treatment, recovery and enforcement; and

WHEREAS, State and local law enforcement and the courts are working with the health system to get individuals treatment and prosecute the large dealers; and

WHEREAS, unfortunately, with the COVID -19 pandemic and the isolation and the increased financial and other stressors faced by Vermonters, Vermont saw a dramatic spike in fatal and non-fatal opioid overdoses; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to do all we can to address increased numbers of opioid overdose fatalities, the Legislature passed, and the Governor signed into law H. 225, *An act relating to possession of a therapeutic dosage of buprenorphine*, which decriminalizes the possession of 224 milligrams or less of buprenorphine on the theory that greater street availability will result in fewer opioid-related deaths and a greater likelihood those with substance misuse disorder will seek treatment; and

WHEREAS, although the data on whether decriminalizing buprenorphine is effective in reducing opiate overdoses is unproven, we know substance use disorder is a chronic illness and we continue to see the devastating impact of opioid addiction; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature has included an endpoint for H. 225, which will sunset on July 1, 2023, providing experts the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of this initiative.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that I, Philip B. Scott, by the authority vested in me as Governor of the State of Vermont, do hereby issue the following directive to the Chief Prevention Officer to coordinate with interested agencies and parties to gather data and assess the impact of legislation to decriminalize the possession of 224 milligrams or less of buprenorphine, as follows:

- A. The Chief Prevention Office shall have the authority to convene a Buprenorphine Task Force made up of representatives from the Departments of the Agency of Human Services and the Department of Public Safety to establish metrics and gather baseline data as necessary to assess the impact of the decriminalization of buprenorphine on Vermonters and Vermont communities.
- B. The Chief Prevention Officer shall call the first meeting of the Task Force prior to June 30, 2021.
- C. The Chief Prevention Officer and the Task Force shall:
 - 1. Develop metrics to assess impacts of expanded access to buprenorphine in the community and advise the Governor on the data to be collected and periodically reported to the Governor.
 - 2. Collaborate with relevant Executive Branch agencies, departments, boards, and commissions, including the Chief Performance Officer and the Executive Director of Racial Equity as well as community treatment providers and local law enforcement to gather relevant data and records necessary to carry out the purposes of this Executive Order.
 - 3. Manage and oversee the collection of data to determine the nature and scope of the impact of the buprenorphine decriminalization policy.
 - 4. No later than January 1, 2023 make recommendations to the Governor regarding the continuation of, and any modifications needed to the policy and state programming, as applicable.

This Executive Order shall take effect upon signing and shall continue in full force and effect until further order by the Governor or June 30, 2023, whichever is earlier.



WITNESS my name hereunto subscribed and the Great Seal of the State of Vermont hereunto affixed at Montpelier this 1st day of June, 2021.

Philip B. Scott
Governor

By the Governor:

Brittney L. Wilson
Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs