



Pennsylvania's Opioid Crisis

Pennsylvania Public Television stations will join the state's efforts to fight the opioid and heroin epidemic, by airing programs which inform the public and provide resources for those battling addiction.

In January Governor Tom Wolf issued a disaster declaration for Pennsylvania's "heroin and opioid epidemic."

Disaster declarations are normally reserved for natural calamities, allowing governors the freedom to waive regulatory and legal procedures to speed up recovery efforts without legislative approval. This is believed to be the first time a disaster declaration has ever been issued for a manmade crisis. According to Wolf "...this crisis is killing 10 to 16 Pennsylvanians every day and straining government finances and resources."

Pennsylvania's drug overdose rate is more than twice the national average, and it continues to rise. In 2016 alone, 4,627 Pennsylvanians died from drug overdoses. That's up from 3,264 fatal overdoses in Pennsylvania in 2015 – and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has just reported that there were 5,260 drug overdose deaths in Pennsylvania for the 12-month period leading up to May 2017.

On March 29, 2018m, at 9:00pm all seven **Pennsylvania Public Television** stations will air *Broken: Women, Families, Opioids* – a compelling new documentary from WQED Public Media in Pittsburgh. *Broken: Women, Families, Opioids* makes the argument that opioid addiction among women has implications which go far beyond

the impact on the addict, affecting the entire family, and especially children. In *Broken: Women, Families, Opioids* we meet children who are born addicted, while others are removed from their homes and placed in foster care or in the care of an extended family member.

In addition to *Broken: Women, Families, Opioids*, many **Pennsylvania Public Television** stations will schedule related programming, including *Hooked Rx: From Prescription to Addiction*, *Understanding the Opioid Epidemic*, and *Frontline: Chasing Heroin*. In Harrisburg WITF Public Media's Emmy award winning news and information series *Health Smart* will focus its resources on Pennsylvania's opioid crisis.

And because the crest of this crisis is still in the future, **Pennsylvania Public Television** stations have committed their resources to producing a year-long quarterly series called *Battling Opioids*. The new series will focus on solutions and provide help and resources for the addict and their families.

In September **Pennsylvania Public Television** stations will devote an entire week of primetime programming to focus on the commonwealth's opioid crisis. The centerpiece of the week will be a single statewide broadcast featuring medical, social service, and clerical professionals along with recovering addicts and their families, discussing solutions for Pennsylvania's opioid addiction crisis. Viewers will be able to call in to ask questions, get answers, and get connected to help.