



County of Onondaga
Office of the County Executive

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Media Release

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Onondaga County Files Lawsuit Against Drug Companies for Opioid Crisis

Over 426 opioid related deaths in Onondaga County since 2012

SYRACUSE, N.Y. – County Executive Joanie Mahoney & Chairman Ryan McMahan announced today that Onondaga County has retained counsel and filed a lawsuit against pharmaceutical companies, manufacturers, distributors and other responsible parties as a result of the growing opioid crisis.

The number of opioid-related deaths in Onondaga County has more than tripled since 2012. The proportion of opioid-related deaths involving fentanyl has also increased 250% between 2015 and 2016. In 2016 there were 142 unintended opioid-related deaths within Onondaga County. Drug use impacts many families in our community, including some of the youngest residents. Onondaga County has the third highest rate in New York State for newborn drug-related diagnoses with 300.6 drug-related diagnoses per 10,000 newborn discharges in 2014.

County Executive Joanie Mahoney said, “The opioid epidemic is a serious and growing problem and our community is not immune to it. Too many families and lives are destroyed by these dangerous drugs and this lawsuit is a major step forward in our effort to combat this crisis from both a public health and legal perspective.”

Onondaga County has the highest rate of opioid overdose deaths among Central New York counties. The rate in Onondaga County is 27.1 per 100,000 population compared to 16.7 per 100,000 in NYS excluding NYC.

Ryan McMahan, Chairman of the Onondaga County Legislature, said, “Combating the opioid epidemic has been a main priority of the County Legislature and this lawsuit is another step towards holding accountable the responsible parties. Whether allocating funds for our health department or supporting the work of our other community partners, the Legislature remains committed to providing the resources necessary to bring an end to this crisis.”

For resources related to opioid and heroin addiction visit <https://combatheroin.ny.gov/>. For more information about Onondaga County's three-pronged approach for combating opioid and heroin addiction visit <http://www.ongov.net/health/opioids/>.

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