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## **Part IV of Four-Part Siena College Poll: What Do We Believe? What Do We Support? Conducted as part of the Prescription for Progress\***

### **90% Agree: Current Opioid Crisis Worse than Previous Crises**

*Most Say Addiction a Disease, Abuse a Sign of Untreated Mental Health Problems & Drug Companies Must be Held Responsible*

***Public Supports Prescription Monitoring, Punishing MD's that Over-Prescribe, Needle Exchange Programs, Improving Access to Meds like Methadone; Oppose Supervised Injection Sites***

**Loudonville, NY.** Ninety percent of New Yorkers agree that the current opioid crisis is more insidious than previous public health crises as overdosing on some opioids including heroin and fentanyl is killing people at previously unheard of rates, according to Part IV of a new Siena College Research Institute (SCRI) poll of New Yorkers. Over three-quarters say that addiction to opioids is a disease and should be treated as a disease just like cancer or heart failure, and 79 percent say that the opioid crisis is another sign that we have an untreated mental health crisis. Seventy-two percent agree that the pharmaceutical companies must be held legally and financially responsible for the crisis, and 75 percent support charging New York's Attorney General to initiate legal proceedings.

Ninety percent of New Yorkers support strengthening the prescription monitoring service to prevent consumers from 'doctor shopping,' and 82 percent are in favor of punishing doctors that are shown to over-prescribe opioids. A majority, 59 percent, favor increasing support to syringe exchange programs, 60 percent support improving access to medications like methadone and buprenorphine, themselves opioids, as a way to wean addicts off other opioids, and 85 percent agree that we should make Naloxone or Narcan, the medication used to block the effects of opioids, readily and freely available to law enforcement and medical professionals. By 59 – 41 percent, New Yorkers oppose increasing funding for supervised injection sites where it would be safe to use heroin.

The survey is part of a community effort by **Prescription for Progress: United against opioid addiction**, a newly formed coalition of leaders in healthcare, media, law enforcement, education and business in New York's Capital Region committed to raising awareness and taking positive steps to address the crisis.

**Prescription for Progress** seeks to unite businesses, nonprofits and government agencies to strive toward the shared goal of fighting addiction. An upcoming survey by SCRI, also commissioned by **Prescription for Progress**, will poll professionals working to address opioid abuse.

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“Despite recognizing that the opioid crisis is killing people more rapidly than other previous public health events, and that opioid abuse shows us that we have an untreated mental health crisis, New Yorkers are evenly divided on whether or not people that abuse opioids should pay the price of their personal choices,” said Siena College Research Institute Director, Don Levy. “Half say it is not up to the rest of us to fix their problems.

“What should we do? Most New Yorkers want to hold drug companies financially responsible for the crisis, punish doctors found to be over-prescribing, and strengthen prescription monitoring. We support making Narcan more available and improving access to methadone as well as increasing support for needle exchange programs, but we oppose increasing funding for supervised injection sites,” Levy said. “Eighty percent even support allowing doctors to order involuntary treatment for opioid addiction in cases in which the doctor believes the patient’s life may be at risk.

“But we oppose allowing medical professionals to prescribe heroin to patients in cases in which they deem this to be the best option, and three-quarters of us agree that until we address the root causes, things like inequality and poverty, we will never make any progress combatting opioid abuse,” Levy said. “Clearly this crisis, that is touching the lives of a majority of New Yorkers, demands not only all hands on deck but also, collaborative efforts across law enforcement, treatment, medical professionals, community leaders, elected officials and all concerned citizens to address this problem from every direction.”

All **Prescription for Progress** data for this and future surveys will be made available to journalism outlets, research organizations and other stakeholders in New York State.

To learn more about the **Prescription for Progress** coalition, including how your organization can participate, please contact Patti Hart, [pahart@timesunion.com](mailto:pahart@timesunion.com) or 518-454-5067. Or sign up here: [www.RXforprogress.com](http://www.RXforprogress.com)

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This Siena College Poll was conducted online February 8-14, 2018 through a proprietary panel developed by Lucid: <https://lucid/> of 1384 New York State residents age 18 and older in English. It has an overall margin of error of  $\pm 3.0$  percentage points including the design effects resulting from weighting. Data was statistically adjusted by age, region, and gender to ensure representativeness. The Siena College Research Institute, directed by Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research primarily in NYS. SCRI, an independent, non-partisan research institute, subscribes to the American Association of Public Opinion Research Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. For more information, call Don Levy at (518) 783-2901. For survey cross-tabs: [www.Siena.edu/SCRI](http://www.Siena.edu/SCRI).