

For Immediate Release  
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## **SUFFOLK COUNTY EXECUTIVE BELLONE AND ROCKEFELLER INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT HOST SUBSTANCE USE AND OPIOID FORUM ON LONG ISLAND**

Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone and the Rockefeller Institute of Government today hosted “Stories from Suffolk” – a policy conversation among leading experts in the field on substance use and opioids to assess the next steps that should be taken to combat the opioid epidemic. The first of its kind forum convened over 300 attendees from across New York State, including medical providers, academic scholars, community advocates, faith leaders, state officials, local law enforcement and criminal justice advocates.

“By putting all stakeholders in a room together, we were able to discuss meaningful solutions that aim to prevent future tragedies,” **said Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone.** “I thank the Rockefeller Institute for helping to host this event and their continued commitment to harnessing the power of research to solve our most pressing public policy challenges.”

**Suffolk County District Attorney Tim Sini said:** “This event was a success in helping us evaluate what’s working, what needs to be tweaked and what our next steps are in combating the opioid epidemic, from intervention and prevention efforts to diversion programs in the criminal justice system and law enforcement efforts to crack down on drug dealers, particularly those who are causing fatal overdoses. It was an incredible experience to have leaders on all fronts together in the same room, working toward effective strategies to save lives and make our communities healthy. I thank County Executive Bellone not only for putting this forum together, but for leading the way in the fight against this epidemic and making sure Suffolk County remains on the forefront of this issue.”

**Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul, co-chair of the NYS Heroin and Opioid Abuse Task Force, who spoke at today’s event, said:** “I have heard firsthand from countless families across the state who have felt the impact of addiction. This epidemic is claiming too many lives prematurely, and we refuse to sit on the sidelines and watch it continue. I commend Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, the Rockefeller Institute of Government, and all of our partners working together to find solutions to combat the crisis and help individuals on the road to recovery.”

### **Actions to Combat the Opioid Epidemic**

Suffolk County has been a leader across the state in implementing innovative methods to further assist treatment, prevention and law enforcement related to the opioid crisis. The following are several actions that are employed by the county:

- The Suffolk County Police Department and Suffolk County Department of Health Services have actively been working to combat the opioid epidemic through enhanced training, education, and prevention efforts. Specifically, the Suffolk County Police department has implemented two programs, Operation Medicine Cabinet and the Ugly Truth, which work to prevent opioid misuse by reducing access and increasing education.
- Operation Medicine Cabinet is a police district-wide program that enables residents to drop off unwanted, unused, or expired medications at a safe and secure location 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The initiative objectives are to decrease cases of accidental ingestion of prescription drugs and to close the gateway to heroin abuse by reducing the availability of prescription drugs. Nearly 50,000 pounds of unused and expired drugs and medications have been turned in to the Police Department since the inception of Operation Medicine Cabinet.
- The Ugly Truth is a heroin/opiate awareness and Narcan training program specifically designed by the Suffolk County Police Department for people 14 years of age and older. The Department partners with the Office of the Suffolk County Medical Examiner, Suffolk County Office of Mental Health and Hygiene and Suffolk County Police Academy's EMT Unit to raise awareness of how adults and children can work together to combat the heroin and opiate epidemic. Presentations are given at schools, fire departments, libraries, churches and community group locations.
- The Suffolk County Department of Health Services has been ensuring the provision of substance use, mental health treatment and case-management services for many years. In 2012, the Department piloted a program that was among the first nationwide to allow first responders, including police officers, to administer intranasal naloxone. The program was so successful, the opioid-overdose-prevention training was subsequently extended to all community members. In 2016, the Department partnered with Long Island Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence to operate a 24/7 hotline to link callers to appropriate treatment or support services.
- More recently, the Suffolk County Department of Health Services has been working closely with local hospitals to provide follow-up services to individuals who are resuscitated from an overdose as well as support for their families. This partnership with hospitals continues to thrive with recent discussion of the introduction of medication assisted treatment in the emergency room setting.

The Rockefeller Institute of Government is a public policy think tank that conducts cutting-edge research and analysis to inform lasting solutions to the problems facing New York State and the nation. Through rigorous, objective, and accessible analysis and outreach, the Institute provides citizens and governments facts and tools they need to make informed public decisions.