



For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Shakira Croce, Assistant Director of Communications
scroce@amidacareny.org, (646) 757-7052

Amida Care Urges New York State to Establish Overdose Prevention Centers

(New York, March 2, 2020) - Doug Wirth, President and CEO of Amida Care, issued the following statement in support of the renewed push to establish overdose prevention centers (also known as supervised injection sites) in New York:

“Overdose prevention centers are sites where people who use injection drugs can do so in a medically supervised setting with linkages to a host of support services. These spaces are proven to reduce the amount and frequency that clients use drugs, help protect people from overdose, increase the delivery of medical and social services, and reduce behaviors such as syringe sharing—which increases the likelihood of HIV and Hepatitis C diagnoses. We call on Governor Andrew Cuomo to make the compassionate and fiscally responsible decision and establish overdose prevention centers across the state.

Thanks to Governor Cuomo’s leadership, New York State has made enormous progress towards Ending the HIV Epidemic, and we could well be the first state in the nation to end the epidemic. At a time when New York is closer than ever before to realizing its goal of Ending the HIV/AIDS Epidemic by the end of 2020, overdose prevention centers remain an untapped resource that would be integral in getting us across the finish line. People who use injection drugs continue to be disproportionately impacted by HIV. Despite the overall decrease in new HIV diagnoses in New York City, there was a slight increase among men who report that they have sex with men and have a history of injection drug use. For every 2,000 new HIV infections prevented, \$1 billion in future state Medicaid costs are averted.

Furthermore, in the midst of the nation’s opioid epidemic, we risk setting ourselves back by not establishing common sense harm reduction services, such as overdose prevention centers. Death rates from opioid overdoses nearly doubled nationally between 2012 and 2016, with an estimated 115 people dying per day of an opioid overdose in 2016. The opioid epidemic has contributed to outbreaks of HIV and Hepatitis C across the country, such as in Scott County, Indiana in 2015 when as many as 20 individuals were diagnosed with HIV each week, many of whom were co-infected with Hepatitis C.

We call on Governor Cuomo to act swiftly to establish overdose prevention centers which will save lives, help end the HIV epidemic and the overdose crisis, and ensure New York remains a leading state on issues of progressive and comprehensive health care.”

About Amida Care

Amida Care Inc. is a not-for-profit health plan that specializes in providing comprehensive health coverage and coordinated care to New Yorkers with complex conditions, including HIV and behavioral health disorders, and people who are of transgender experience or who are homeless (regardless of HIV status). Amida Care has a wide network of health care providers throughout New York City and is the largest Medicaid Special Needs Health Plan (SNP) in New York State. For more information, visit www.amidacareny.org.