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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **DA Michael McMahon, BP James Oddo, NYPD officials and SNP Bridget Brennan Announce Overdose Response Initiative**

*\*\*\* Innovative program to investigate overdose deaths will be first of its kind in New York City \*\*\**

STATEN ISLAND, NY – Richmond County District Attorney Michael E. McMahon, Staten Island Borough President James S. Oddo, NYPD Assistant Chief Edward Delatorre and Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan today announced an Overdose Response Initiative that will directly address the crippling drug crisis on Staten Island by investigating overdose deaths in an effort to root out drug dealers and offer supportive services to grieving families.

“Staten Islanders are facing loss to overdose deaths at an alarming rate. Beginning March 1, whenever a fatal overdose occurs, the NYPD will immediately notify my office and our two agencies will begin gathering information regarding the deceased in an attempt to identify and locate the sources of the narcotics that are killing our residents, ruining our communities and destroying the fabric of our hometown,” said **District Attorney Michael E. McMahon**. “The Overdose Response Initiative, the first of its kind in New York City, will investigate overdose deaths in an effort to uncover who is peddling this fatal poison so that we can hold them accountable for the damage they are causing to Staten Island’s families and neighborhoods. My office is determined and committed to hunting down drug dealers, aggressively prosecuting them and sending them to prison.”

“It has been said many times and I will continue to repeat that the fight against our opioid problem must be fought on many fronts. At the same time as we continue to expand our educational efforts, access to Naloxone, and fight to expand treatment options, we must also aggressively and creatively pursue those dealers who are supplying the drugs that are killing our neighbors,” said **Borough President James S. Oddo**. “I applaud DA McMahon, Chief Delatorre, and the men and women of the NYPD for this initiative that will help track down and send drug dealers to prison.”

“The Overdose Response Initiative will allow NYPD investigators to quickly gather evidence and more efficiently coordinate law enforcement efforts following the tragedy of an overdose death,” said **NYPD Assistant Chief Edward Delatorre**. “This unique approach will assist the NYPD and prosecuting agencies in their efforts to investigate and hold responsible those who distribute dangerous and illegal narcotics within our neighborhoods.”

“This initiative is a much needed response to a tragic crisis that is gripping Staten Island, and destroying countless lives throughout the city. I commend District Attorney Michael E. McMahon, Borough President James S. Oddo and NYPD Assistant Chief Edward Delatorre for recognizing that the dealer who sells deadly narcotic drugs bears responsibility for the tragic consequences that unfold, and I thank them for giving energy and focus to our efforts,” said **Special Narcotics Prosecutor Bridget G. Brennan**. “The Office of the Special Narcotics Prosecutor is committed to supporting this initiative and will work closely with the Staten Island District Attorney’s Office and NYPD to identify the source of deadly narcotics citywide.”

The unique initiative’s multi-step approach will work as such:

- When a drug overdose death occurs, NYPD patrol supervisors/desk officers will notify RCDA personnel immediately. During that notification, information will be gathered about the deceased. Additionally, a responding ADA will complete an “Overdose Worksheet” questionnaire regarding the death scene – providing date and time of discovery; who discovered the deceased, and did the deceased have a cell phone on his/her person.
- If the deceased had a cell phone on his/her person, the NYPD will voucher said phone for investigatory purposes and attempt to obtain consent to search the phone from the next of kin.
- If consent is obtained, a search of the phone will be done and information recovered will be compared to other incidents to establish common links and examine similarities.
- The information obtained on the initial questionnaire will be forwarded to the District Attorney’s Narcotics Bureau, which will assign an Overdose Response Team (comprised of an ADA, designated D.I.’s/Detectives, and a Community Advocate) to reach out to the family. The Overdose Response Team will interview the family in a sensitive and caring manner in hopes of discovering the source of the drugs that killed their loved one. The response time for speaking with the family will vary on a case by case basis taking into account individual circumstances.
- The Medical Examiner’s Office will do a full toxicology work-up on the deceased to determine whether the death was solely the result of drugs or if an additional factor such as a cutting agent played a role.
- The Community Advocate will assess what kinds of services, if any, the family might need going forward following this tragedy.
- Once the family visit is complete, all compiled intelligence will be forwarded to the District Attorney’s Narcotics Bureau who will develop cases in conjunction with NYPD Narcotics Borough Staten Island and other investigative units at District Attorney’s office.

“While there is no question that a comprehensive, all-hands-on-deck approach is necessary to combat this problem – an approach that involves prevention, treatment, and increased attention by law enforcement – we believe that adding this new initiative to our tool box will aid law enforcement in developing, investigating, and going after the source of these deadly narcotics,” concluded McMahon.

**City Council Minority Leader Steven Matteo** said, "While public awareness, education and treatment are all critically important, our efforts to combat the opioid abuse crisis and stem fatal overdoses on Staten Island must also include law enforcement strategies. District Attorney McMahon's Overdose Response Initiative provides a sensible and comprehensive template to developing investigative leads that will help our police and prosecutors break up the network of illegal drug activity in this borough, and cut off some of these lethal substances at the source. "

**City Council Member Debi Rose** said, “Staten Island’s drug epidemic has to be fought on many fronts, and this initiative strikes at the source. Law enforcement has been investigating shootings and car crashes for decades to improve public safety. Now, the NYPD and the District Attorney’s office will investigate overdose deaths so that we can hunt down and lock up dealers, taking them and the drugs they peddle off our streets. For generations, too many young lives have been cut tragically short by drug abuse, and I commend the NYPD and District Attorney for working proactively to protect our safety and the safety of our children.”

**City Council Member Joe Borelli** said, “The overdose response initiative represents an innovative approach to an issue that, unfortunately, we have all become too familiar with. I'm happy to support this program, and thank District Attorney McMahon for his efforts.”

**State Sen. Diane Savino** said, “I want to thank District Attorney McMahon for his leadership in this effort. Staten Island has long been ground zero in the fight against this epidemic. This new initiative, along with other measures, is part of a comprehensive approach to helping the people whose lives are affected by this drug. This new initiative will also provide real-time information to law enforcement in their efforts in going after the dealers.”

**State Sen. Andrew Lanza** said, “I commend the District Attorney and Borough President for this innovative program which represents another important piece in our battle to save lives by turning back the opioid abuse and addiction epidemic.”

**Assemblywoman Nicole Malliotakis** said, “In addition to prevention and treatment, fighting the scourge of heroin predominately includes keeping drug dealers off the streets and behind bars where they belong. The plan put together by District Attorney McMahon and Chief Delatorre will help ensure the bad guys pay the appropriate price for the tragedies they cause, and prevent them from doing more harm to our friends, neighbors and loved ones.”

**Assemblyman Michael Cusick** said, “The initiative being launched today will be a tremendous resource for Staten Island as we continue to battle the drug crisis facing our borough. We will only overcome this scourge when we can identify where these drugs are coming from and how our friends & neighbors are falling into the pit of addiction in the first place. Responsibly gathering personal information and using it to address the root of our problem is a tremendous step in this direction, and I want to thank DA McMahon, Borough President Oddo, the NYPD & everyone involved for making this innovative program a reality.”

**Assemblyman Matthew Titone** said, “Information is the single most powerful tool we have to combat this addiction and overdose epidemic. Any initiative that addresses this is long overdue and welcome.”