



Sheriffs' Association of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

2426 North Second Street | Harrisburg, PA 17110

Phone (717) 236-7336 – FAX (717) 236-7332

www.pasheriffs.org

Pennsylvania Sheriffs Association Opioid Agonist Treatment (OAT) Policy Statement

In the past two decades 400,000 Americans have died from an opioid related overdose. Each year, more lives are lost to drug overdoses than were lost in the Vietnam War, a war which lasted almost twenty years. In 2017 over 70,000 Americans died of a drug overdose, and Pennsylvania's rate of overdose deaths was more than double the national average.

Today, we have an addiction crisis in America, and that crisis has made our jails de-facto treatment centers. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports, "two thirds of people in jail meet the criteria for drug dependence or abuse." Most of these individuals have an opioid use disorder (OUD) and would benefit from medications to assist in their recovery.

OAT is the use of methadone or buprenorphine to manage OUD. These medications are FDA approved, evidence based, and significantly reduce morbidity and mortality. They also importantly:

- Reduce the cycle of arrest, incarceration and release
- Improve safety and security within jails
- Reduce costs
- Lower post release overdose deaths
- Manage withdrawal safely and humanely
- Facilitate a path to recovery

As Sheriffs we have an opportunity to change lives and battle one of the worst public health issues of our time. Our jails can become places to engage, educate, and treat those with substance use disorders — ultimately saving lives, reducing recidivism and putting people on the path to recovery.

Since 2017 the National Commission on Correctional Health Care and the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) have supported expanding OAT and naltrexone to all correctional settings. The Pennsylvania Sheriffs Association fully supports this evidence based strategy with a focus on OAT, which demonstrates improved outcomes. We believe a focus on the health and wellness of the individual will lead to a new path forward — improving lives and the safety of our communities.

About PSA - The Pennsylvania Sheriffs' Association (PSA) represents the 67 county Sheriffs in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with the support of the almost 2,300 Deputies and a general membership of more than 16,000. The PSA is a non-profit organization as defined under 501(c)(6). The PSA is dedicated to promoting a better knowledge of the

rights and duties of Sheriffs, promoting cooperation and efficiency for all Sheriffs, along with raising the level of professionalism among sheriffs and their deputies.

Since 1923, the PSA has served as an information clearinghouse for the Office of Sheriff.