

Central Penn Business Journal - cpbj.com

Health Care Manufacturing & Distribution Government

Cumberland County suing opioid manufacturers, distributors

By **Shelby White**, February 14, 2018 at 3:00 AM



(Photo / Thinkstock)

Cumberland County is the latest to join a number of governments suing opioid manufacturers and distributors for allegedly misleading the public and medical community about the dangers of using opioids.

The suit, announced Monday and **filed on Tuesday**, comes just over a month after **Gov. Tom Wolf declared** the opioid and heroin epidemic a statewide disaster emergency in Pennsylvania and less than two months after York and Dauphin counties filed similar complaints against opioid-makers and providers, whom they blame largely for the opioid crisis.

Among the 20 defendants are four physicians as well as several pharmaceutical giants.

Last year, Cumberland County lost 83 people in opioid-related deaths, a number that has grown over the past four years despite the county's introduction of several programs designed to combat the opioid crisis, such as a program that secures grant money to provide Naloxone to first responders, an opioid intervention court, and a Vivitrol program at the county prison. Vivitrol is a medication that was originally used to treat alcoholism and is now being used to treat opioid addiction. It works like an opioid receptor blocker to stop opioids from working.

The county is seeking to recover public resource damages, which they say will be used in continuing efforts to confront the opioid epidemic. Vince DiFilippo, chairman of the Cumberland County Board of the Commissioners, said there is no cost to taxpayers with this filing.

Cumberland County is being represented by the national law firm Napoli Sckolnik PPLC, a group of personal injury attorneys based in New York City. Napoli Shkolnik is also representing York County in its litigation.

According to the Office of Attorney General, Pennsylvania had 4,642 fatal drug overdoses in 2016, and 80 percent of persons suffering from heroin addiction began by abusing prescription drugs.

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