

AG REYES ANNOUNCES \$350 MILLION SETTLEMENT WITH MARKETING FIRM PUBLICIS OVER ROLE IN OPIOID EPIDEMIC

SALT LAKE CITY— Today, Utah Attorney General Sean D. Reyes announced a \$350 million national settlement with Publicis Health to resolve investigations into the global marketing and communications firm’s role in the prescription opioid crisis. Utah will receive nearly \$3.93 million from the settlement to help address the opioid crisis.

By agreeing to the settlement terms, Publicis acknowledged its conduct caused harm, and the agreement will help the hardest-hit communities deal with the opioid crisis, build lasting infrastructure, and save lives. The company will also disclose on a public website thousands of internal documents detailing its work for opioid companies like Purdue Pharma and will stop accepting client work related to opioid-based Schedule II or other Schedule II narcotics.

“While I am AG, my office will continue holding accountable any individual or entity contributing to the ‘death sentence’ opioids have imposed on so many Utahns,” Attorney General Reyes said. “No amount of money will ever restore the precious lives lost or destroyed by the greed of opioid manufacturers and those who helped market these drugs to an unsuspecting public. But, hopefully these funds will help Utahns access treatment, recovery and prevent many more from ever becoming trapped in the vicious cycle of opioid addiction.”

Today’s filings in Third District Court describe how Publicis’ work contributed to the crisis by helping Purdue Pharma and other opioid manufacturers market and sell opioids. Court documents detail how Publicis acted as Purdue’s agency of record for all its branded opioid drugs, including OxyContin, even developing sales tactics that relied on farming data from recordings of personal health-related in-office conversations between patients and providers. The company was also instrumental in Purdue’s decision to market OxyContin to providers based on patients’ electronic health records.

According to the Utah Department of Health and Human Services, more than 4,800 Utahns have died from prescription opioid overdoses in the last 20 years. These deaths—and the impacts on thousands who have struggled with opioid addiction—have created considerable costs for our health care, child welfare, and criminal justice systems. More significant than the dollars and cents in damage to our state, the impact on opioid addiction, substance use, and overdose deaths has torn families apart, damaged relationships, and devastated communities.

Today’s filing is the latest action Attorney General Reyes has taken to combat the opioid crisis and to hold accountable those responsible for creating and fueling the crisis. To date, Utah has received \$495 million in legal settlements from drug manufacturers and others for their roles in the crisis. Most of the funding will be split between the state and participating Utah counties to support addiction treatment, prevention and recovery.

Colorado led the multistate group during this investigation and was joined on an executive committee by the attorneys general of California, Connecticut, Idaho, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, and Vermont. They are joined by the attorneys general from all states, territories, and the District of Columbia.

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