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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Wolf Administration Joins ‘Farm Town Strong’ to Fight Rural Opioid Misuse During STOP OVERDOSES IN PA: GET HELP NOW WEEK**

**Newport, PA** – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding today was joined by Wolf Administration officials and leaders of agricultural advocacy organizations at the Perry County State Health Center to bring attention to the opioid epidemic in farm country and provide resources to those struggling with opioid-use disorder.

“The most important crop a farmer is raising is their children,” said Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. “This opioid epidemic knows no boundaries; it’s in our cities and on our farms. I urge anyone going through this struggle to reach out and talk to your friends, family, and neighbors – you’re not alone in this. We must band together and be ‘Farm Town Strong’ to strike down the stigma and break the grips of opioid addiction.”

Terra Brownback of Spiral Path Farm in Perry County, who lost her son Arias to opioid overdose when his daughter was two, was present in support of the Wolf Administration’s mission to raise awareness of resources and reduce stigma in rural Pennsylvania. “We didn’t know until it was too late,” said Brownback, of her son’s struggle with opioids, “I know it’s painful and feels hopeless, but others are going through it too. Please, seek help.”

Last month, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services launched KinConnector, a helpline for families raising children and grandchildren who lost parents to opioids. KinConnector was established through Act 89 of 2018, which established a kinship navigator program for Pennsylvania. The Bair Foundation was selected as the kinship navigator through a competitive procurement and will work with these kinship care families to help them access resources and supports and connect with Pennsylvania families in similar situations. KinConnector can be reached by calling 1-866-KIN-2111 (1-866-546-2111).

“When a child is unable to live in a parent’s care, supporting family members who assume caregiving responsibilities of their grandchildren, nieces, or nephews are often the best option to provide the child with a safe, healthy, and loving home,” said DHS Executive Deputy Secretary Leesa Allen. “As these families adjust, they may need additional supports and resources. Pennsylvania’s KinConnector helpline can help grandparents and other family members who need support.”

Farm Town Strong is a national campaign by the American Farm Bureau Foundation and National Farmers Union that encourages open communication to reduce stigma and increase education about the availability of resources. It encourages farm towns to overcome the epidemic through strong farmer-to-farmer support and resiliency.

“The opioid crisis is a community invasive problem that has touched many rural families across the state. In my home area of Susquehanna County, we have lost a number of good, young

people to the opioid epidemic,” said Jim Barbour, a member of Pennsylvania Farm Bureau’s State Board of Directors. “If your family has not been directly affected, you likely know of a family that has suffered a loss or has someone dealing with a drug problem. Opioid addiction is a weight that everyone is carrying and we need to quickly find a remedy to solve the problem.”

In recognition of National Recovery Month, Pennsylvania is hosting **Stop Overdoses in PA: Get Help Now Week**, where residents will be able to go to a state health center or their local pharmacy to get the overdose reversal medication naloxone. This medication reverses the effects of an opioid overdose and gives the patient a chance at recovery. The Perry County State Health Center is one of over 75 participating locations distributing free naloxone on Wednesday, September 25.

“We know that the opioid epidemic does not discriminate and often times rural areas are hit the hardest,” said DDAP Deputy Secretary Ellen DiDomenico. “It is imperative that we continue to have conversations like these to help break stigma associated with the disease of addiction. During the month of September, we celebrate National Recovery Month to spread hope and awareness to those struggling. All Pennsylvanians deserve a healthy life, regardless of their geographic location, and there are resources available for those in need.”

For more information on Pennsylvania’s response to the opioid crisis visit [www.pa.gov/opioids](http://www.pa.gov/opioids).

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