Heroin and prescription drug abuse can be addictive and deadly. Overdose is a nationwide public health concern, particularly for young people. Statistics indicate that nine out of 10 people with addiction started using substances before they turned 18 years old and that nearly half of young people who inject heroin report abusing prescription pain killers before starting heroin. New York State has documented a 115% increase in heroin treatment admissions in upstate New York and a 116% increase on Long Island.

To combat this epidemic, New York state has a multi-sectoral response that includes legislative actions, such as the 911 Good Samaritan Law to provide legal protection against criminal action for people who seek medical assistance for an overdose, and a 2006 law that makes it legal for non-medical persons to administer Naloxone (Narcan) to prevent opioid/heroin overdose fatalities. Most recently, New York expanded access to naloxone in pharmacies across the state. In addition, county-based coalitions are working with law enforcement, the medical community, schools, businesses, civic agencies and the media to address the problem of heroin and opioid dependency comprehensively.

This webcast will review the scope of the problem of heroin and prescription opioid dependence in New York State and provide an overview of state and local responses to address it.