

## CVS to pay Massachusetts \$795K, tighten policies for opioids

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CVS Health Corp. has agreed to pay Massachusetts \$795,000 and will tighten its policies for dispensing opioids following an investigation into its drug prescription practices, Attorney General Maura Healey said Thursday.

Healey said a settlement reached between the state and the Woonsocket, Rhode Island-based drug store giant resolves past allegations.

Prior to March 2013, Healey's office says certain CVS locations failed to provide pharmacists with sufficient internet service to access the state's Prescription Monitoring Program. The online database provides a patient's prescription history and is designed to curb the abuse of addictive medications.

Healey's office said the investigation also showed that certain CVS pharmacists failed to use "sound professional judgment" when dispensing controlled substances.

At a news conference in Boston on Thursday, Healey said some CVS pharmacists dispensed prescription drugs to customers even after receiving warnings not to.

"This is a problem," she said.

In a statement, CVS said that the company, which has about 350 pharmacies and 1,200 pharmacists in Massachusetts, recognizes the

importance of the state's prescription database as a tool to detect and prevent drug abuse.

Since the deficiencies were revealed, the company has been requiring its Massachusetts pharmacists to review the customer's prescription history on the database before dispensing certain prescribed drugs. It has also revised its prescription drug policies and improved pharmacist training.

Healey says the agreement marks the first time CVS has instituted a specific requirement for its pharmacists to check a state prescription drug database.

"This is a big deal," she said Thursday.

Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan, CEO of The Dimock Center, the Boston health center where Healey made the announcement, said the settlement represents an important first step in enforcing critical opioid prevention measures.

Over 1, 500 people died from opioid overdoses in 2015, state officials said Thursday. Healy's office says \$500,000 of the \$795,000 that CVS has agreed to pay the state will go to drug abuse programs.

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