

Date April 07, 2023

Attorney General Moody's Week In Review - April 7, 2023

This week, I traveled to Sarasota County to issue a public safety alert about a deadly animal tranquilizer known as xylazine that is killing Floridians. Sarasota is experiencing an increased number of deaths due to abuse of this drug, so I joined local and state law enforcement to issue a warning.

According to a [news report](#), in 2021, more than 230 Floridians died with xylazine in their systems. Sarasota County recorded the third highest number of deaths in Florida with this animal sedative present in the decedents' bodies. It is also now the sixth-most frequently identified illicit substance in processing drug-related evidence statewide.

Not only is this drug killing Americans, but it is also so dangerous that, if injected, the user could develop rotting skin lesions on limbs that might need to be amputated.

The combination of xylazine and fentanyl is complicating life-saving measures by first responders. When mixed with fentanyl, xylazine can make it difficult for first responders to administer life-saving treatment—as naloxone only works on opioids, and xylazine isn't an opioid.

Florida already outlawed this drug, and now we are calling on the Drug Enforcement Administration to follow our lead and take action to reduce the supply of this dangerous substance and save lives.

Anyone struggling with substance abuse should visit DoseOfRealityFL.com, our statewide resource with information for combating drug abuse. Users can also find treatment resources at TreatmentAtlas.org.

I ask Floridians to please talk to your family and friends, urge them not to take illicit drugs—because just one pill can kill.

Stay Safe, Florida.

Ashley

In The News

Attorney General Ashley Moody warns Floridians of "zombie drug", Spectrum Bay News 9

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Tampa Bay-area sees spike in overdose deaths involving fentanyl mixed with animal drug, WTSP Tampa Bay

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Moody, Florida law enforcement launch Tranq public safety alert, The Center Square

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Attorney General Moody visits Sarasota to warn of 'zombie' drug dangers, ABC 7 Sarasota

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Moody visits Sarasota: Rise in Xylazine has made use of deadly opioids even more lethal, Sarasota Herald-Tribune

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Florida's attorney general warns about a synthetic drug called Xylazine, ABC 20 Gainesville

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Florida AG warns of dangerous 'zombie drug', News Nation

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Several arrested in statewide theft ring involving heavy-equipment rentals at Home Depot, The Ledger

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Florida arrests made in Home Depot scam to rent, sell \$1.1 million in equipment, Orlando Sentinel

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Florida Attorney General warns Floridians that scammers are targeting taxpayers and their refunds, WFTV 9 Orlando

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Protecting Floridians

Attorney General Moody, Sheriff Judd and FDLE Shut Down Organized Retail Theft Ring Spanning 16 Counties



Attorney General Ashley Moody, Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement shut down a major organized retail theft operation that spanned 16 counties. An investigation by Attorney General Moody’s Office of Statewide Prosecution, the Polk County Sheriff’s Office and FDLE found that an organized retail crime ring caused hundreds of thousands of dollars in losses to Home Depot. Attorney General Moody’s Statewide Prosecutors are charging six defendants with felony counts of grand theft.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “The suspects in this case went to great lengths and long distances to execute this elaborate construction rental scheme—stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars in heavy construction equipment. They thought they were being clever by using stolen identities and smashing the GPS trackers on the equipment, but it wasn’t enough to outsmart Sheriff Judd’s deputies, FDLE and my Statewide Prosecutors.” [Read More](#)

AG Moody Secures More Than \$600,000 For Florida Medicaid Following Multistate Investigation into Cochlear Implant Manufacturer



Attorney General Ashley Moody's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit secured a payment of more than \$600,000 to Florida Medicaid through a multistate action against the Advanced Bionics Corporation, a manufacturer and distributor of cochlear implants. ABC allegedly violated the federal and various state False Claims Acts by submitting false or fraudulent claims for reimbursement to federal healthcare programs, including Medicaid. Attorney General Moody's MFCU, 44 other states and the federal government negotiated the payment of more than \$12.6 million in damages nationwide.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Through this multistate action, we are securing millions of dollars for taxpayer-funded Medicaid programs nationwide and deterring the company from submitting false claims. I am proud of my Medicaid fraud attorneys and analysts for the hard work they put into this case, and for their collaboration with other states and the federal government to resolve this matter and recover taxpayer dollars." [Read More](#)

Personal Care Services Provider Arrested for Submitting Forged Doctors' Referrals and Fraudulently Billing Medicaid Nearly \$400,000



Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit

Attorney General Ashley Moody's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit is announcing the arrest of the owner of a personal care company for forging doctor referrals and fraudulently billing Medicaid. With the assistance of the Ocoee Police Department, an investigation found that Keondra Vernessa Burch, owner of Divinely Chosen Services, submitted fraudulent documents for nearly three years, causing a loss of nearly \$400,000 to Medicaid.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "This fraudster forged medical records to steal nearly \$400,000 from taxpayers. My Medicaid fraud investigators uncovered this scheme and stopped it. Now the defendant will have to answer for his crime in a court of law."

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Events

This week, Attorney General Ashley Moody issued a public safety alert in Sarasota County with Sarasota County Sheriff Kurt Hoffman, Sarasota Police Chief Rex Troche, Florida Department of Law Enforcement Special Agent in Charge Fort Myers Region Eli Lawson and State Attorney Ed Brodsky highlighting a rise in xylazine deaths in that area of the state.



Attorney General Moody with Polk County Sheriff Grady Judd announcing the takedown of an organized retail theft operation that impacted 16 Florida counties. Attorney General Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution will prosecute the defendants.



The Florida Attorney General's Office helped kick off the 2023 Law Enforcement Torch Run at the Historic State Capitol. Chief Deputy Attorney General John Guard emceed the event, with more than 40 members of the Florida Attorney General's Office participating in the two-mile event to support Special Olympics Florida. Law enforcement officers carry the Flame of Hope Torch through all 67 counties leading up to the Special Olympics Florida's annual State Summer Games.



