



National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors, Inc.

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Executive Director
Robert I. L. Morrison

November 3, 2014

The Honorable Chris Christie, Governor
Office of the Governor
PO Box 001
Trenton, N.J. 08625

Dear Governor Christie:

On behalf of the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors, Inc. (NASADAD), I am writing to thank you for dedicating your time and energy to issues related to substance use disorders. In particular, thank you for educating the citizens of New Jersey regarding the discrimination people with substance use disorders face and promoting the benefits of prevention, treatment, and recovery services.

As you know, rates of substance use disorders and overdose deaths have devastated the State of New Jersey and the country at large. Prescription opioid pain relievers and heroin have driven this epidemic in many States. 37 States report increases in admissions to treatment for heroin during the past two years, and 27 States report increases in fatal overdoses. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 46 Americans lose their lives to a prescription drug overdose every day. The stigma and shame associated with substance use disorders is pervasive in communities across the nation. You have taken action in a number of ways to address the discrimination and promote improved access to services. For example, your Facing Addiction Task Force seeks to create or enhance cross-sector partnerships and facilitate action.

We agree that more must be done to support substance use disorder treatment and recovery services and prevention efforts. NASADAD and a number of other stakeholders have been engaged in this mission for decades. As we work toward this goal, you have reminded us all that effective treatment services can and do help people enter into recovery and regain their lives. We also know that effective prevention programming can delay alcohol and drug use and in turn, reduce the risk of someone developing a substance use disorder as an adult. Finally we know that recovery services provide crucial support, helping people to maintain their recovery and avoid relapse.

With the alarming increases in overdose deaths, the NASADAD Board of Directors has identified opioid misuse and abuse as a core priority and directed staff to develop products and partnerships to advance solutions. For example, the Association developed an inquiry of the nation's State substance abuse agency directors in order to gauge the extent of the problem, summarize action taken by these agencies, and identify opportunities and challenges as we move forward (please see the attached NASADAD inquiry). NASADAD also developed a brief paper detailing the legislative strategies that States have taken to address overdose deaths (please see the attached NASADAD brief). NASADAD will continue to update and develop products and maintain our partnerships with other State-based Associations such as the National Governors Association (NGA), Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), and others.

As you continue your important work, we hope you also consider promoting the benefits of the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant – an effective and efficient program distributed by formula to all States, the District of Columbia, and the Territories. Overall, the SAPT Block Grant “prevention set-aside” represents, on average, approximately 65% of State substance abuse agencies’ budgets for substance abuse prevention services. These efforts would signify tremendous progress in States’ efforts to reduce addiction – including those efforts in the State of New Jersey.

Ms. Lynn Kovich, Assistant Commissioner in New Jersey’s Department of Human Services, serves as the NASADAD member from your State. Ms. Kovich brings a wealth of knowledge to NASADAD. We are proud to have Ms. Kovich serve as our member from New Jersey and greatly appreciate her continued leadership and expertise on these issues. We look forward to working with your office through Assistant Commissioner Kovich in order to improve our nation’s response to addiction.

Thank you again for your leadership.

Sincerely,



Robert I. L. Morrison
Executive Director

Cc: Lynn Kovich
Assistant Commissioner for the Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, New Jersey
Department of Human Services
NASADAD Member

Jennifer Velez, Esq.
Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Human Services

Mark Stringer (State Director, Missouri)
NASADAD President