

April 16, 2026



DC Update: NASADAD Leadership Attends Rx Summit & Meets with National Leadership, CDC & ONDCP Health Advisory, Alumni Update Featuring Dr. Shalini Wickramatilake, and More.

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NASADAD News

NASADAD Joins South Carolina and New York to Present on Role of State Alcohol and Drug Agencies in Managing Federal Funding

On Monday, April 6, NASADAD Executive Director Robert Morrison joined Sara Goldsby, State Director, South Carolina/President of NASADAD and Dr. Chinazo Cunningham, State Director, New York/Vice President of NASADAD at the Rx and Illicit Drug Summit in Nashville Tennessee to talk about the role of State alcohol and drug agencies in managing federal grants supporting substance use disorder services. The panel was moderated by Daniel Blaney-Koen, Senior Legislative Attorney for the American Medical Association (AMA). NASADAD provided an overview of the Association,



its members, key functions played by State alcohol and drug agencies, and top federal policy priorities including the Substance Use Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services (SUPTRS) Block Grant and State Opioid Response (SOR) Grant. Sara Goldsby and Dr. Cunningham spoke about their respective State systems, use of SUPTRS Block Grant and other federal funds, top challenges, successes, and important considerations moving forward. To access NASADAD's fact sheet about the role of State alcohol and drug agencies, visit [Role of State Alcohol and Drug Agencies | NASADAD](#).

[Pictured left to right: Sara Goldsby, Robert Morrison, Dr. Chinazo Cunningham]

NASADAD Leadership Meets with Dr. Volkow, Leader of National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)



On Monday, April 6, Dr. Chinazo Cunningham, State Director from New York and NASADAD Vice President; Sara Goldsby, State Director from South Carolina and NASADAD President; and Robert Morrison, NASADAD Executive Director, met with Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). The dialogue was intended to provide an update on State developments and trends, research projects, and opportunities for collaboration. Dr. Volkow provided an overview of NIDA priorities and progress to date. Dr. Volkow was joined by Dr. Jennifer Hobin, Director of Scientific Planning and Coordination.

[Pictured left to right: Sara Goldsby (S.C.), Dr. Nora Volkow (NIDA), Dr. Chinazo Cunningham (N.Y.), Robert Morrison (NASADAD), and Dr. Jennifer Hobin (NIDA)]

NASADAD Members Meet with Rear Admiral Chris Jones at Rx Summit



On Tuesday, April 7, a number of NASADAD members met with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Rear Admiral Chris Jones, Director of the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP)/acting Director of SAMHSA's Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ) at the Rx and Illicit Drug Summit in Nashville, TN. States expressed appreciation for the work moving forward at CSAP to support prevention activities and noted a desire to continue coordination with CBHSQ on issues related to data.

[Pictured: Dr. Latika Davis-Jones (PA), Robert Morrison (NASADAD), Dr. Chinazo Cunningham (N.Y. and NASADAD Vice President), Sara Goldsby (S.C. and NASADAD President), Rear Admiral Chris Jones (SAMHSA), Taryn Sloss (TN), and Jennifer Shuler (AR).]

Around the Agencies

CDC & ONDCP Health Advisory: Medetomidine Contamination in the U.S. Illicit Fentanyl Supply Increases Risk of Overdose and Severe Withdrawal Syndrome

On April 2, 2026, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), with the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), issued a Health Advisory titled "[Medetomidine in the U.S. Illicit Fentanyl Supply Increasing Risk for Overdose and Severe Withdrawal Syndrome](#)." The advisory aims to inform public health professionals, clinicians, laboratory personnel, and individuals at risk about the rising detection of medetomidine in the illicit drug supply across U.S. jurisdictions and the risk of severe withdrawal syndrome from exposure.

It recommends that public health professionals use syndromic surveillance to detect signs of medetomidine-related intoxication or withdrawal. It also advises public health and safety agencies and clinicians to collaborate in monitoring the local drug supply and share timely information to coordinate clinical and public health responses. Clinicians should consider medetomidine in suspected opioid overdose with prolonged sedation unresponsive to opioid overdose reversal medication (OORM), consult a toxicologist or poison control at 1-800-222-1222, and report unusual cases to the appropriate health department. Other key points include:

- “Medetomidine (also known as 'rhino tranq,' 'mede,' or 'dex') is not approved for human use but is approved for sedation and analgesia in dogs. Its dextro-isomer, dexmedetomidine, is approved for procedural sedation in humans.”
- “Testing of illegal drug samples and clinical specimens has identified racemic mixtures of levomedetomidine and dexmedetomidine isomers without the preservatives commonly found in medical or veterinary formulations, making diversion of pharmaceutical products unlikely. Since pharmaceutical-grade products contain only dexmedetomidine, these findings suggest medetomidine is being synthesized in clandestine laboratories.”
- “Medetomidine can cause profound sedation, bradycardia, and hypotension. Stopping medetomidine following regular use may lead to severe withdrawal, similar to clonidine withdrawal, with symptoms including hypertension, anxiety, nausea, vomiting, and fluctuating alertness, that can require emergency or intensive care.”
- “Because fentanyl is involved in most overdoses involving medetomidine, opioid overdose reversal medications (OORM; e.g., naloxone) should be administered to restore normal breathing in suspected overdoses.”

The Health Advisory can be accessed [here](#).

CMS Press Release: Implementation Guidance for New Federal Medicaid and CHIP Funding Limits for Certain Noncitizens

On April 8, 2026, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) issued a press release entitled "[CMS Issues Guidance to Implement New Limits on Federal Medicaid and CHIP Funding for Certain Noncitizens](#)." The release outlines the implementation of Section 71109, “Alien Medicaid Eligibility,” of the Working Families Tax Cut Legislation, effective October 1, 2026. This policy restricts states from claiming federal matching funds for Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) for individuals who are not U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or who are classified under specific noncitizen categories as defined by statute. The State Health Official (SHO) letter provides states with operational guidance on eligibility systems, applications, verification, and claims processing. CMS will provide technical assistance and use existing oversight mechanisms to support compliance and ensure accurate federal fund claiming.

The CMS press release can be accessed [here](#).

The SHO letter can be accessed [here](#).

Alumni Update: Where Are They Now?

Dr. Shalini Wickramatilake

Dr. Shalini Wickramatilake’s eight-year journey at NASADAD began in 2013 as a SAMHSA CSAP Fellow, during which she progressed through the roles of Research Analyst, Policy Associate, Federal Affairs Manager, and ultimately Director of Federal Affairs. Entering the field with a strong interest in mental health, she soon recognized the deep connections between substance use, eating disorders, and mental health.

After NASADAD, Dr. Wickramatilake advanced intergovernmental addiction strategy at the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and then served as Senior Advisor at SAMHSA. There, she led national efforts on women's mental health, substance use, homelessness, and eating disorders, launching a federal working group and summit to elevate eating disorders as a public health priority.



Today, as Director of Health & Human Services at the National Association of Counties, Dr. Wickramatilake provides strategic leadership for NACo's nationwide portfolio; setting priorities, supervising staff, overseeing major initiatives on opioid settlement funds, vaccination, and childcare, and guiding county officials through emerging public health challenges. She translates federal and state policies into actionable insights for counties, supporting population-level change nationwide.

Dr. Wickramatilake considers working with state alcohol and drug agencies one of the most rewarding parts of her career, providing a strong foundation for her ongoing work in public health and policy. She credits her NASADAD experience and Rob Morrison's mentorship for teaching her the value of building trusted relationships and strategic advocacy.

Research Roundup

NIDA Blog: NIDA-Funded AI Startups Impact the Addiction Space

On April 15, 2026, NIDA Director Dr. Nora Volkow published a blog post titled "[NIDA Small Business Grants Support AI Startups](#)." NIDA has utilized the U.S. government's Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program to facilitate the translation of addiction science into practical applications. NIDA's Office of Translational Initiatives and Program Innovations (OTIPI) also coordinates funding and offers technical guidance to emerging startups. The article highlights the following startups:

- [Scite](#): Founded by Josh Nicholson, Scite aims to enhance the reliability of scientific literature by contextualizing scientific citations. In 2018, Nicholson and his team were selected for NIDA's "\$100,000 Start an SUD Startup" Challenge. In 2019, they received a Fast-Track SBIR grant to develop the company's machine-learning classifier and citation-extraction technology, which automatically determines whether research citations support, contradict, or just mention prior work.
- [S-3 Research](#): Founded by Tim K. Mackey, S-3 Research produces actionable public health and safety intelligence by identifying evolving tactics used by illicit opioid sellers online. In 2017, Mackey's team received NIDA's "\$100,000 Start an SUD Startup" Challenge award. NIDA then provided scientific and commercial guidance that helped secure SBIR Fast-Track funding. In 2023, S-3 Research was awarded a NIDA contract to develop a digital platform to identify communities with limited access to quality addiction treatment and offer data-driven solutions to reduce disparities. This initiative created a national, comprehensive database of substance use disorder (SUD) treatment facilities, integrating demographic, economic, social, and other health-disparity-related data with local community information.
- [Invistics](#): Founded by Tom Knight, Invistics was a platform used to detect medication theft and diversion by healthcare workers. Supported by SBIR awards in 2017, the team integrated data from Automated Dispensing Cabinets, Electronic Health Records, and other IT sources, applying predictive analytics and supervised machine learning to reconcile medication transactions. A five-year NIDA-funded [study](#) demonstrated up to 96% accuracy, enabling faster, more efficient

detection of drug diversion than manual reporting. In 2023, [Wolters Kluwer Health](#) acquired the platform. Now called Sentri7, this AI-enabled solution strengthens clinical surveillance and compliance, helping health systems monitor controlled substances and reduce patient risk.

Webinars to Watch

NCPG Webinar: A Parent's Perspective on Navigating a Child's Gambling Addiction



The [National Council on Problem Gambling \(NCPG\)](#) is hosting a webinar entitled "[Ask Me Anything: A Parent's Perspective on Navigating a Child's Gambling Addiction](#)." This no-cost webinar is on May 1 at 1:00 pm ET. The event will feature Kim Freudenberg, a parent of a young individual affected by gambling addiction, who will provide an in-depth discussion on supporting a child experiencing gambling-related harm. Drawing from her personal experience, Freudenberg will offer insights into the emotional, financial, and relational consequences of gambling addiction for parents and caregivers. Specifically, the session will address recognizing harm, navigating treatment and recovery systems, advocating for appropriate care, and seeking support as a family member.

[Registration](#) is required.

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