

March 7, 2019



D.C. Update: Impact of Family First Act on State child welfare systems, Problem Gambling Awareness Month, and more

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Around the Agencies

FDA releases opioid-specific priorities for 2019

Last week, outgoing Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Scott Gottlieb, MD, released the agency's opioid-specific priorities for 2019. In a [statement](#), Commissioner Gottlieb noted that the FDA does not want to "look back five years from now, at an even larger crisis, with regret that there were more aggressive steps that we could have taken sooner. All options are on the table." The statement includes a list of some policy and regulatory priorities for 2019, including:

- Reducing misuse of prescription opioids;
- Support addiction recovery and reduce overdose deaths;
- Promote research and innovation in non-addictive pain treatments; and
- Strengthening the agency's response against the influx of illicit opioids.

NIAAA-funded study on brain energy patterns offers insights on effects of alcohol on the brain

A new study funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) simultaneously assesses the patterns of energy use and neuronal activity in the human brain, which, according to a [press release](#), improves our understanding of how alcohol affects the brain. This new approach for characterizing brain energetic patterns could also be useful for studying other neuropsychiatric diseases. The research was led by Dr. Ehsan Shokri-Kojori of the NIAAA Laboratory of Neuroimaging and Dr. Nora D. Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). In previous studies they and their colleagues have shown that alcohol significantly affects brain glucose metabolism, as well as regional brain activity, which is assessed through changes in blood oxygenation. In the press release, Dr. Volkow states, "The findings from this study highlight the relevance of energetics for ensuring normal brain function and reveal how it is disrupted by excessive alcohol consumption."

In the News

March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month

As described in a recent Association of Problem Gambling Service Administrators (APGSA) [press release](#), March is National Problem Gambling Awareness Month. This year, APGSA is using

Awareness Month to bring attention to the issue of potential gambling among youth who play certain types of video games: "In recent years, researchers have been looking into how gaming has been weaving gambling into the virtual stories. Unfortunately, while the situations are virtual, the money spent to participate is often real, and state and national surveys suggest that the youngest adults are at highest risk for developing gambling problems." The press release offers tips on how to gamble responsibly, such as setting a limit on how much money and time will be spent gambling.

[Governing article outlines the impact of the Family First Prevention Services Act on State child welfare systems](#)

A new [article in Governing](#) describes the Family First Prevention Services Act, which passed as part of the 2018 omnibus appropriations bill. The Family First Act addresses issues related to child welfare and substance use. Some provisions altered the allowable uses of Title IV-E (child welfare) funding so it can be used to pay for services before children need to be removed from their home. The bill also allows foster care maintenance payments to be made for children who live with a parent while the parent is in residential treatment for a substance use disorder. The legislation also amended the Regional Partnership Grant (RPG) program, an initiative managed by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), promoting increased State-level interagency collaboration by listing both the State child welfare agencies and the State alcohol and drug agencies as mandatory partners for the grant.

As described in the article, "Family First redirects the way states will get reimbursed for their services. For the first time, the federal government will pay states for evidence-based programs aimed at keeping kids in their homes rather than placing them in foster care. Mental health care, in-home parenting programs and substance abuse treatment will now all be covered." The article also states that, "many child welfare advocates and state officials nonetheless have serious concerns about how the new policy will play out. The timeline for implementing the new approach is unrealistic, they say, and the law ignores many of the frontline realities of the current state of child services."

Upcoming Events

[Webinar on Drug Threats in the U.S.](#)

The National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS) will soon be hosting a webinar, [Drug Threats in the United States: 2019 Update](#). NDEWS began in 2014, building upon the former National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Community Epidemiology Work Group (CEWG). NDEWS continues to monitor drug trends in many of the same areas as the CEWG, however, NDEWS also reports on drug trends across the U.S. as new issues emerge. The upcoming NDEWS webinar will feature a presentation by Jill M. Head, Supervisory Chemist at the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The webinar will be held on Wednesday, March 13th at 2:00 pm EST.

News from NASADAD

[Seeking nominations for 2019 Ramstad-Kennedy Award](#)

The Ramstad/Kennedy Award was established in 2008 to recognize a Single State Authority (SSA) Director who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in support of recovery and *National Recovery Month* and to acknowledge Congressmen Jim Ramstad (R-MN-ret) and Patrick Kennedy (D-RI-ret) for their commitment to recovery and recovery-oriented policies. Award planners are currently seeking nominations for the 2019 award. [Applications](#) are due April 26, 2019, and the award will be presented at the [NASADAD Annual Meeting](#) in Bethesda, MD, which will be held June 4-6, 2019.