D.C. Update: New NGA resources, CDC study on opioid misuse and binge drinking, and more

Capitol Hill Happenings

House Committee on Oversight and Reform Holds Hearing on Federal Approach to Opioid Treatment
The House Committee on Oversight and Reform held a hearing on June 19, 2019 titled, "Medical Experts: Inadequate Federal Approach to Opioid Treatment and the Need to Expand Care." The Committee is led by Chairman Elijah Cummings (D-MD) and Ranking Member Jim Jordan (R-OH). Witnesses included: Dr. Susan R. Bailey, President-elect, American Medical Association (AMA); Dr. Arthur C. Evens, CEO, American Psychological Association (APA); Ms. Angela Gray, Nurse Director, Berkeley-Morgan County Board of Health, West Virginia; Dr. Yngvild K. Olsen, Vice President, American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM); Ms. Jean Ross, President, National Nurses United; and Nancy Young, Executive Director of Children and Family Futures (CFF). The hearing examined the treatment gap, the effectiveness of recent federal efforts to address addiction, and the Comprehensive Addiction Resources Emergency (CARE) Act (H.R. 2569), which is sponsored by Chairman Cummings.

News from NASADAD

NASADAD presents before Faces and Voices' Association of Recovery Community Organizations
On Wednesday, June 19th, Robert Morrison, Executive Director of the National
Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD) provided an overview of the Association’s core public policy priorities at the Faces and Voices’ Association of Recovery Community Organizations (ARCO) National Leadership Summit, held just outside Washington, D.C. Patty McCarthy Metcalf serves as Executive Director of Faces and Voices of Recovery (FAVOR). The presentation provided background information on provisions within the Comprehensive Addiction Recovery Act (CARA), the 21st Century CURES Act, and the SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act. In addition, an overview of federal funding supporting substance use disorder programs was provided. The attendees were particularly interested in activities related to recovery funded by the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis (STR) Grants and the State Opioid Response (SOR) Grants. NASADAD provided some brief background regarding recovery-specific activities in eight States. Slides can be accessed here, and more information about ARCO can be found here.

**NASADAD attends Hill briefing on substance use disorder treatment strategies for ethnic populations**

On June 19th, Emily Diehl, NASADAD’s Public Policy Associate, attended a briefing, "SUD Treatment Strategies for Ethnic Populations: Outcomes, Benefits and Success," hosted by Treatment Communities of America (TCA) with support from the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). Panelists included: Emory Cabrera, Executive Director of Clinical Services with Integrity Health; Dave Mineta, President and CEO of Momentum for Mental Health; Najiy Shabazz, Counselor and person in recovery from Regional Addiction Prevention; and Dr. Sushma Taylor, President and CEO of Center Point. The briefing focused on high rates of substance use disorder (SUD) within racial and ethnic populations, but lower rates of treatment admissions for this population. Speakers highlighted various barriers to treatment including a lack of culturally competent providers, lack of information due to language or cultural barriers, and therapeutic approaches that aren’t compatible or adjusted for ethnic minorities. The briefing also included a discussion on culturally competent services that are effective for this population.

**News from the States**

**Dr. Stephanie Woodard, SSA of Nevada, Discusses Opioid Recovery on Vegas PBS**

Recently Nevada’s State alcohol and drug agency director, Dr. Stephanie Woodard, was interviewed on Vegas PBS for their “Nevada Week” segment, Opioid Recovery: Nevada’s Eternal Battle. Others who were interviewed on the segment included Dr. Mel Phol, Chief Medical Officer of Las Vegas Recovery Center; Will Allphin, Director of Programs for Foundation for Recovery; and Krista Hales, IOTRC Director for the Center for Behavioral Health. The experts who were interviewed spoke about various efforts to address the opioid crisis through the use of medication-assisted treatment (MAT) and the importance of recovery-oriented systems of care. In particular, Dr. Woodard noted that Nevada has seen decreases in prescription opioid misuse and higher rates of treatment admissions stating, “When we look at making sure we have some stabilization within the State and ensuring greater access to care, we’re certainly doing much better.”

**In the News**

*New York Times* Highlights Ohio Elementary School Implementing Drug Prevention Curriculum
The *New York Times* recently published an article about the effects of the opioid crisis on children in Ohio. The State had the country’s second highest rate of opioid overdose deaths in 2017. Minford Elementary School is in a county that has been hit particularly hard by the crisis. Almost half of the students enrolled have witnessed drug use at home and often have behavioral and psychological problems as a result. According to the article, “Governor Mike DeWine proposed $550 million in student wellness funding,” and schools like Minford Elementary have used the money to hire a teacher to meet one-on-one with students who have experienced trauma as a result of parental substance use. The school also provides a sensory room for children to use when they need to calm down and classes have special lessons on self-control and anger management. The State is in the process of expanding the program through the 12th grade.

National Governors Association Releases Publications Addressing the Infectious Disease Consequences of the Opioid Crisis

The National Governors Association (NGA) recently released two publications focused on State approaches to addressing the infectious disease consequences of the opioid crisis. The opioid crisis has led to increased transmissions of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and other infections resulting from injection drug use. To address these challenges, the NGA Center for Best Practices Health Division conducted a study of Kentucky’s syringe services programs, and has published *Addressing the Rise of Infectious Disease Related to Injection Drug Use: Lessons Learned from Kentucky*. Both publications were developed with partnerships with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and ChangeLab Solutions. NGA has also released *State Approaches to Addressing the Infectious Disease Consequences of the Opioid Epidemic: Insights from an NGA Learning Lab*, which reviews the development and implementation of strategic plans to address infectious disease consequences of the opioid crisis in Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Kentucky, Michigan, Utah, Virginia and Washington.

Around the Agencies

CDC Study on Correlation Between Binge Drinking and Prescription Opioid Misuse

According to a new study by researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over half of Americans who misused prescription opioids report drinking alcohol frequently. The study found that binge drinking is a strong predictor of prescription opioid misuse.

SAMHSA Releases FOA for Mental and Substance Use Disorders Prevalence Study

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has released a funding opportunity announcement (FOA) for a national study to estimate the prevalence of mental and substance use disorders in the United States. The study will provide critical information to guide the development and implementation of evidence-based prevention and treatment strategies.
prescription opioids also participated in binge drinking from 2012-2014. Using data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), researchers found that “people who binge drank were nearly twice as likely to misuse prescription opioids as non-drinkers, even after taking into account other factors...like age and sex.” According to the study, 2 in 3 people who engaged in binge drinking and the misuse of opioids were age 26 or older and had lower education and income levels. As a result of the study, the CDC researchers recommend a “comprehensive and coordinated approach” to help reduce the risk of drug overdoses resulting from binge drinking and prescription opioid misuse.

**Medicaid Patients Insured After Expansion Less Likely to be Prescribed Opioids**

A recent study funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and published in *Addiction*, found that Medicaid patients in the State of Oregon who returned to the program or were newly covered due to Medicaid expansion were less likely to be prescribed opioids. The study included 225,295 adult Medicaid beneficiaries and found that 52.5% of continuously enrolled patients were prescribed opioids compared to 42.3% of newly enrolled patients and 49.3% of returning beneficiaries. The study also found that 16% of continuously insured patients were diagnosed with opioid use disorder (OUD), compared with 12% of returning beneficiaries and 13% of newly enrolled patients. The authors of the study concluded that “policymakers should consider the importance of Medicaid continuity in combating the opioid epidemic and the need for adequate access to continuous insurance.”

The Administration (SAMHSA) is currently accepting applications for the Mental and Substance Use Disorders Prevalence Study (MDPS). The funding opportunity announcement states that “current surveillance systems leave several gaps in the understanding of [serious mental illness and substance use disorders],” including a lack of accurate estimates of individuals with serious mental disorders and the exclusion of populations who do not reside in households. The purpose of the grant program is to ensure that these gaps in surveillance are addressed through a pilot program that assists in estimating the actual number of individuals living with mental and substance use disorders. The grant program will address surveillance gaps by creating a pilot program with the goal of obtaining accurate estimates of individuals living with mental and substance use disorders. SAMHSA plans to issue 1 grant of up to $30,000,000 for up to 3 years. Applications are due Friday, August 16, 2019.