

June 28, 2019



D.C. Update: NY OASAS uses music to help youth in recovery or at risk of addiction; new study highlights geographic variation in overdose rates across U.S.; and more



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News from the States

NY OASAS launches youth peer support and music workshops

The New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) -- led by Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez, who serves on the NASADAD Board of Directors--recently collaborated with [Road Recovery](#), an entertainment industry-based non-profit, to provide peer support and music workshops for at-risk youth and young adults. The State now has four "Trax" programs that are being held at Youth Clubhouses created and owned by OASAS, which provide a safe location for young people in recovery or at risk of addiction. Individuals in the Trax program will meet weekly with a mentor who will "help them create, plan, and execute their own community outreach events culminating with performance finales featuring professional sound and lighting." The initiative funded through the State Opioid Response (SOR) grant. Read an announcement [here](#).

New Jersey's Naloxone Distribution Day

The New Jersey Department of Human Services announced in a [press release](#) that the State distributed more than 16,000 free naloxone kits on June 18th. This effort is believed to be the largest single-day public distribution of naloxone in the country and was offered anonymously at 174 pharmacies across the State. New Jersey's Human Services Commissioner, Carole Johnson, stated that, "We launched our free naloxone day initiative to give residents a lifesaving tool and

the chance to save friends, loved ones and community members.” [\[SW 1\]](#) The distribution day was also used to share information about treatment opportunities and the State’s treatment hotline. The State alcohol and drug agency director for New Jersey is Valerie Mielke, Assistant Commissioner for the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, who serves on the NASADAD Board of Directors.

In the News

New study highlights geographic variation in overdose rates across U.S.

A [study](#) recently published in the *American Journal of Public Health* found widespread geographic variation in overdose rates across the country. The study examined the relationship between overdose deaths and economic, labor market, and demographic characteristics. Researchers found that “fatal overdose rates are higher in counties characterized by greater economic disadvantage, more blue-collar and service employment, and higher opioid prescribing rates.” Specifically, prescription opioid overdoses are located in economically disadvantaged geographical areas with a larger proportion of service industry workers. High heroin and “syndemic” (defined as high rates across all major opioid types) counties tended to be urban, have larger concentrations of professional workers, and were less economically disadvantaged. Researchers concluded that opioid policy strategies need to be tailored to specific geographical areas in order to be effective.

Analysis of Medicare data finds that surgeons continued to overprescribe amidst opioid crisis

Kaiser Health News, in collaboration with Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, conducted an analysis of Medicare data and found that many surgeons prescribed large quantities of opioids to patients, even after relatively low-pain surgeries. According to an [article](#) about the study by *STAT*, researchers examined almost 350,000 prescriptions written from 2011 to 2016 and determined that “total amounts frequently exceeded current guidelines from several academic medical centers,” and prescribing patterns did not change significantly over the six year study period. The analysis examined data on prescribing habits after seven common surgical procedures and found that physicians prescribed large quantities of opioids when fewer pills or over-the-counter medications would have been equally effective.

News from NASADAD



NASADAD attends briefing on the opioid crisis featuring Surgeon General

On June 26th, Robert Morrison, NASADAD’s Executive Director, and Emily Diehl, Public Policy Associate, attended a briefing, “Combating the Opioid Epidemic,” hosted by the Pew Charitable Trusts and featuring the Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. Jerome Adams. The Surgeon General conveyed his commitment to strengthening community relationships in order to address the opioid crisis. Dr. Adams stressed the importance of working

directly with communities and earning trust before attempting to intervene with policy changes. In response to the opioid crisis, Dr. Adams issued the first [Surgeon General’s Advisory](#) in 13 years, asking more Americans to carry naloxone, and he reiterated his position on the importance of the medication during the briefing. He also discussed other priorities, including the safe disposal of prescription

medications and warm handoff programs for individuals being released from hospitals and criminal justice settings. He stated his motto of “better health through better partnerships” and advocated for new partnerships with members from the business, faith, education, public safety, and national security communities.

Around the Agencies

SAMHSA National Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day 2019 webcast now available

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), in collaboration with the Administration for Community Living (ACL) and the National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging (NCMHA), held the National Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day on May 20, 2019. The event opened with statements from the Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use, Elinore McCance-Katz, MD, PhD, and the Assistant Secretary for Aging, Lance Robertson. Presentations that followed covered the spectrum of prevention, treatment, and recovery services for older adults with serious mental illness and substance use disorders; suicide prevention efforts with older adults; older adult peer support services; serving older veterans; and trauma-informed care for older adults. The event also included a panel with members from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) who provided personal stories and advice on effective assistance for older adults. The webcast of Part 1 of the meeting is available [here](#) and Part 2 is available [here](#).