

October 10, 2019



D.C. Update: Increases in new viral hepatitis infections, study on drive times to OTPs in rural areas, and more

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## Meet the Member



### **Arlene González-Sánchez, First Vice President of NASADAD**

Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez, First Vice President on NASADAD's Board of Directors, was appointed by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo on January 3, 2011 as Commissioner of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). Commissioner González-Sánchez brings to OASAS more than 30 years of experience in the field of substance use and mental health administration, policy development, and medical research, as well as

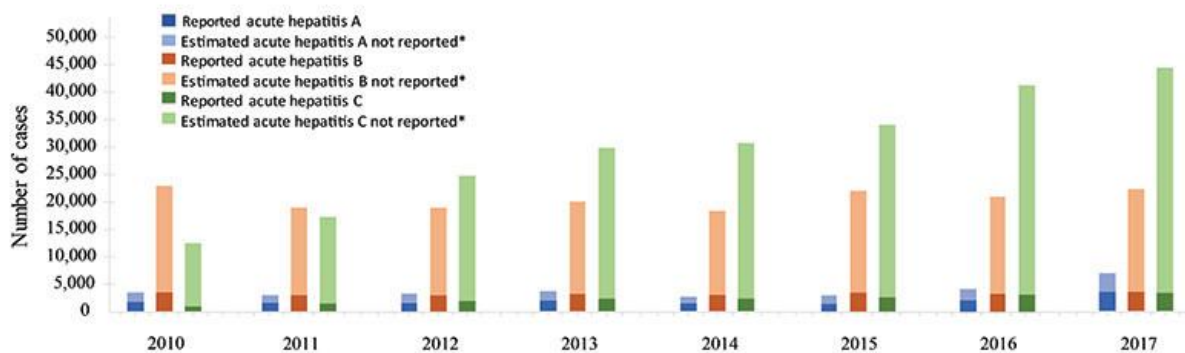
expertise in integrating accessible systems of care for New Yorkers. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the *2018 Ramstad-Kennedy Award*, *2015 Public Service Leadership Award* from the Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies, and the *Outstanding State Member Awardee* from the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA). Commissioner González-Sánchez is a Licensed Master Social Worker and also received a Master of Science in Cell Biology/Cytogenetics from Fordham University.

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## Around the Agencies

## CDC report finds increases in new viral hepatitis infections

The Office of Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS Policy (OIDP) within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released its [Surveillance for Viral Hepatitis](#) report with new data from 2017. While the report highlights ongoing progress in reducing hepatitis deaths, the U.S. experienced increases in new infections of hepatitis A, B, and C in 2017.



The number of hepatitis A cases increased nearly 70% due to outbreaks among people experiencing homelessness, individuals who use drugs, and men who have sex with men. Additionally, Hepatitis C infections have tripled since 2010 and continue to increase among the young adult population who report injection drug use. The surveillance summary discusses the importance of bolstering prevention efforts and focusing on high-risk communities that need additional support.

## CDC announces \$7.2 million in opioid overdose prevention research

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC) recently announced ten awards for research addressing opioid overdose prevention methods. Over \$7.2 million was awarded to various institutions to evaluate the implementation and impact of new or existing prevention methods. The research is intended to expand on current knowledge of effective prevention measures and improve the implementation of interventions to prevent opioid overdoses. Awards were granted to hospitals and universities in the following States: Massachusetts, Colorado, Maryland, New York, Rhode Island, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut.

## GAO releases report on educational stability for youth in foster care

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently released a [report](#) addressing the implementation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, enacted in 2015. The bill includes provisions to improve the educational stability of youth involved in the foster care system by requiring educational agencies to keep children in their current school. The report found that State educational agencies (SEAs) face several challenges in implementing the provisions, including local staff turnover and the cost of transporting students to their original school. The GAO recommended that the Department of Education develop an online clearinghouse of resources to enable States to share information on

## CDC and FDA recommend individuals refrain from e-cigarette products containing THC

Both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have recently released recommendations on the use of e-cigarettes in response to the growing number of vaping-related lung illnesses. On September 27<sup>th</sup>, the CDC announced in a [press release](#) that people should "consider refraining from use of e-cigarette or vaping products, particularly those containing THC." The FDA [followed](#) on October 4<sup>th</sup> by strengthening their initial warning and encouraging the public to stop using THC-containing vape products and any vaping products obtained off the street or from unknown sources. Both recommendations also include the

this issue.

### [NIAAA releases Director's Report from Advisory Council meeting](#)

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) recently [released](#) the "NIAAA Director's Report on Institute Activities to the 152<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism." The Advisory Council meets periodically throughout the year and generates notes from the meetings, including reports from NIAAA's leadership. This overview is provided by NIAAA Director Dr. George F. Koob and includes budgetary information, research updates, recently issued funding opportunity announcements, staff transitions and awards, and a preview of what's ahead for NIAAA.

latest data on confirmed and probable cases of lung injury associated with e-cigarette use.

### [NIAAA spectrum article discusses alcohol and "deaths of despair"](#)

An [article](#) featured in the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) Spectrum webzine examines the rise in deaths driven by drug and alcohol overdoses, suicides, and liver disease. According to the article, alcohol plays a prominent role in "deaths of despair" and contributes to the development of liver disease, the exacerbation of mental health conditions, and is often present in suicide attempts. The article concludes with a call to raise awareness of the health risks posed by alcohol and the dangers of using alcohol to cope with life challenges.

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## Research Roundup

### [Study on drive times to OTPs in rural areas](#)

A recent [study](#) published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) that found drive times to opioid treatment programs (OTPs) may be as much as six times longer in rural counties compared to urban ones. The study examined drive times to OTPs in urban and rural counties in five of the States hit hardest by the opioid crisis and found that the average drive from rural counties was 49.1 minutes compared to 7.8 minutes in urban counties. According to the article, the drive times present a significant barrier for individuals in rural areas who must be present at the OTP six days a week to receive their medication.

### [Upcoming NIAAA study on biological markers for alcohol treatment](#)

A [study](#) funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), and conducted by the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation in partnership with the Mayo Clinic, will search for genetic markers that predict an individual's response to acamprosate, a drug commonly used to treat individuals with alcohol use disorder. The five-year study will look for biomarkers to help addiction professionals determine, based on a blood test, each patient's responsiveness to the medication. Researchers are also hoping the study will lead to a broader understanding of acamprosate and the potential development of new medications in the future.

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## In the News

### [Pennsylvania judge rules in favor of supervised injection site](#)

A U.S. District Judge in Pennsylvania recently [ruled](#) that a nonprofit group's plan to open a supervised injection site does not violate the Controlled Substances Act. While this allows the project to proceed, the Department of Justice (DOJ) is expected to appeal the decision. In a statement, Deputy Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen [stated](#) that, "The department is disappointed in the court's ruling and will take all available steps to pursue further judicial review. Any attempt to open illicit drug injection sites in other jurisdictions while this case is pending will continue to be met with immediate action by the department."

### [The National Council releases guide on adolescent substance use in primary care settings](#)

The National Council for Behavioral Health, supported by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, announced a new [resource](#) for primary care providers. The “Improving Adolescent Health: Facilitating Change for Excellence in SBIRT [Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment] Change Package” is an interactive guide providing tools to facilitate conversations with adolescents on substance use. The package includes scripts, concrete strategies and recommendations, a simulation component, and an online forum for collaborative learning.

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