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Robert I. L. Morrison

August 7, 2020

Strategic Planning Team
National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
6001 Executive Blvd # 5128
Rockville, MD 20852

Correspondence submitted to: NIDAstrategicPlan@nida.nih.gov

Dear Sir or Madame:

Thank you for seeking comments through the *Request for Information (RFI): Inviting Comments on NIDA's Strategic Plan for 2021-2025*. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input.

Critical role of State alcohol and drug agencies: We begin by noting each alcohol and drug agency plays a critical role in overseeing and implementing the publicly funded prevention, treatment and recovery service system. This role – reviewed below – is important to consider as federal initiatives – including those conducted and supported by NIDA – are considered and implemented.

Planning, oversight and accountability: To begin, State alcohol and drug agency directors work to craft and implement annual plans for Statewide program and service delivery. In the process, our members capture data and information describing top challenges, populations served and the types of services provided. State alcohol and drug agencies use such tools as performance management and reporting, contract monitoring, corrective action planning, on-site technical reviews and technical assistance.

Promoting quality: State agencies work to ensure quality services through State established standards of care and NASADAD members participate in initiatives to promote innovative and evidence-based practices and programs. For example, State Directors use data described above to help advance these practices and drive management decisions. NASADAD members are committed to continuous quality improvement and utilize different tools to achieve this goal. We view NIDA's work as one of these vital tools.

Management of the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant: An important role played by NASADAD members is the management and oversight of the SAPT Block Grant – a \$1.8 billion federal formula grant that is allotted to NASADAD members. By statute, twenty percent of the SAPT Block Grant must be dedicated to critical primary substance abuse prevention programming. The

SAPT Block Grant is an important program that affords States the ability to allocate resources across the continuum based on their own unique needs.

Promoting coordination across State government: NASADAD members promote cross-agency collaboration at the State level given the broad impact of alcohol and other drug use has on other sectors. For example, State directors engage with criminal justice entities on issues like offender reentry, drug court programs and diversion initiatives. State alcohol and drug agencies also coordinate with sectors related to child welfare, transportation, employment, education and others.

Unique relationship with the provider community: State alcohol and drug agencies have a very unique and important relationship with the provider community. State agencies observe this connection is critical given the increased pressures on those delivering prevention, treatment and recovery services. NASADAD members assist providers by offering training, continuing education, oversight and other support.

Reporting data: States collect and report data describing the services and programs funded by the SAPT Block Grant, other federal discretionary grants along with State supported initiatives. This data includes information on the number of people served along with the impact of these services. Examples include reducing the use of alcohol and other drugs; the impact of services on employment status; the impact of services on criminal justice involvement and more.

Investing in the “Science-to-Services” agenda by working with State alcohol and drug agency directors: Congress has made unprecedented investments in research – and with good reason. We understand excellent work moves forward at NIDA. A consistent challenge, however, has been translating this cutting-edge research into every-day practice. The literature tells us that years may pass before a discovery becomes common practice – including the everyday work in the publicly funded alcohol and drug prevention, treatment and recovery field.

A number of years ago, SAMHSA, NIAAA and NIDA partnered to launch a “Science-to-Service” initiative focused on research to practice (and practice-to-research) issues. One specific byproduct of this initiative was enhanced interaction between the alcohol and drug research community and State alcohol and drug agencies. We recommend a specific plan to revive this initiative with an intentional focus on interactions with NASADAD members. We offer these ideas for consideration:

- NIDA and SAMHSA sponsored a series of regional meetings to discuss State Directors’ role with NIDA’s Clinical Trial Network (CTN) and their respective Nodes. These meetings helped State directors understand the projects moving forward in a corresponding Node. In addition, researchers in the region gained an opportunity to hear from State alcohol and drug agencies regarding initiatives, trends and challenges. We recommend re-energizing this activity given the expansion of the CTN itself through the large investments in the Helping to End Addiction Long-term (HEAL) Initiative.

- NIDA sponsored an annual day-long meeting where NIDA-funded researchers directly shared findings with State alcohol and drug agency directors and their staff. This meeting allowed States to learn about cutting edge information that could help improve service delivery. In both the regional CTN meetings and the day-long meetings, the discussions included ways to enhance NIH's portfolio related to publicly funded State systems research, efforts that could lead to increased collaboration between NASADAD members and local researchers/universities, and ideas to further expand the SAMHSA-NIH-NASADAD collaboration.
- NIDA, with support from SAMHSA, managed a funding opportunity titled "Enhancing State Capacity to Foster Adoption of Science-Based Practices." The grant, first issued in 2004, was designed "...to conduct preliminary or pilot research that helps to create, implement, expand, and/or sustain a process of continuous science-based practice improvement in publicly supported drug abuse prevention and treatment programs." NASADAD believes that this initiative, or another program similar in design, would help strengthen the capacity of State alcohol and drug agencies to support and engage in critical research activities that may ultimately improve programs, practices and services. We also recommend adding "recovery" to the grant in order to ensure the entire continuum is represented.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at rmorrison@nasadad.org.

Sincerely,



Robert I.L. Morrison
NASADAD