



State of New Jersey

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GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE REACTS TO GOVERNOR CHRIS CHRISTIE'S SIGNING OF HISTORIC DRUG COURT LEGISLATION

TRENTON (July 19, 2012) ... John Hulick, Executive Director of the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse, reacted to Governor Chris Christie's signing of S-881 this morning. The legislation concerns the treatment for drug and alcohol dependent persons as well as expands eligibility and provides for a phased-in mandatory drug court program.

Hulick - who has been involved with addiction service initiatives in the state for nearly twenty five years including past service as Governor Christie's Policy Advisor for Human Services, Children and Families; NCADD-New Jersey's Director of Public Affairs and Policy; and, as a direct addiction service provider - stated, "I've had the opportunity to work with numerous gubernatorial administrations over the past two decades and I, along with many others, have waited for a governor to truly seize the bully pulpit in order to bring focus to the state's number one public health problem - alcoholism and drug abuse. Governor Christie has succeeded in bringing this moment to New Jersey with his signing of the mandatory drug court legislation and his continued public stance in calling addiction what it is -- a treatable illness that deserves treatment not incarceration." Hulick continued, "The Council applauds Governor Christie for his leadership in bringing this to fruition -- it is an historic moment that also brings hope to tens of thousands of individuals and families who live with the shame and stigma of addiction."

Legal coercion is frequently used to leverage addiction treatment upon persons who would otherwise not seek it voluntarily. The influence of legal coercion on retention in addiction treatment has been found to reduce the risk of dropout across a variety of treatment modalities and is a proven success.

"Individuals with an addiction are coerced into treatment every day and successfully recover." Hulick stated, "They are coerced by family or employer pressure and are often mandated into treatment by the courts because of drunk driving or other criminal offenses. With today's signing, non-violent offenders assessed with an addiction, who heretofore could deny a course of treatment, will now be provided an opportunity to also recover even if they are at first unwilling."

GCADA leads the state's efforts to plan for and coordinate New Jersey's addiction prevention, treatment, prevention policy and services through development of a Comprehensive State Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Master Plan submitted annually to the Governor and State Legislature. The Council has been charged by the Christie Administration to create a "Blueprint for a Drug-Free New Jersey - 2020" which will address how the State's future substance abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery services should be delivered with an eye toward identifying efficiencies in the current system and implementing evidence-based practices that improve outcomes.

The Blueprint is to also include a plan to address New Jersey's heroin and other opiate use epidemic amongst its youth and young adults which the Council has begun to tackle by establishing a Task Force on Heroin and Other Opiate Use by New Jersey's Youth and Young Adults. The Task Force has been holding public hearings throughout New Jersey to hear from affected individuals; their family members, who at times have tragically lost their loved ones to this epidemic; and experts to assist the Council as it seeks to make meaningful recommendations to address this public health epidemic.

"The GCADA looks forward to supporting Governor Christie's continued efforts to meaningfully address alcoholism and drug abuse in New Jersey through the development of the Blueprint." Hulick concluded, "The Governor's commitment to this issue generates much needed hope at a time the Council's Task Force is hearing heartbreaking stories by mothers and fathers from throughout New Jersey who have tragically lost their young adult children to prescription painkiller and heroin addiction, many of whom were court involved. This hope will serve to drive the systemic change necessary to effectively and efficiently provide services to addicted individuals and their family members."

To learn more about the GCADA and its Task Force hearings, visit the Council's Facebook page at, www.facebook.com/gcada.newjersey.

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