

NASADAD Budget Impact March 22 2012

NASADAD/NASMHPD Host Hill Briefing on the Impact of the State Fiscal Crisis and Treatment Gap on Public Substance Abuse and Mental Health Systems

On Thursday, March 22nd, NASADAD and the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) jointly hosted a Congressional Briefing titled "The Impact of the State Fiscal Crisis on Public Substance Abuse and Mental Health Systems." The briefing was sponsored by Representatives Grace Napolitano (D-CA), Tim Ryan (D-OH), and John Sullivan (R-OK).

NASADAD Executive Director Rob Morrison started the briefing by talking about the work of NASADAD and NASMHPD and introducing the speaker panel, which included the Presidents of the NASADAD and NASMHPD. Dr. Laura Nelson, the Deputy Director of the Arizona Division of Behavioral Health Services and President of the NASMHPD Board of Directors, began the briefing by highlighting the \$4.35 billion in cuts States have made to mental health services since 2009, which have come at a time when demand for services is steadily increasing. She also emphasized the importance of the Community Mental Health Services (CMHS) Block Grant, administered by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Mark Stringer, Director of the Missouri Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse and President of the NASADAD Board of Directors, spoke about the problems facing State substance abuse systems, highlighting the gap between the demand for services and available treatment capacity. In 2010, 20.5 million individuals needed treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol problem but did not receive it. Stringer also spoke about the importance of the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant, which provides on average, 42 percent of substance abuse funding for State substance abuse agencies, and on average, 64 percent of their substance abuse prevention expenditures. He noted some of his state's outcomes for the SAPT Block Grant; offenders under community supervision who receive and complete treatment have a return rate of 11 percent, compared to 27 percent for those who do not receive treatment. Current alcohol use among 6th-12th graders declined from 27.1 percent in 2006 to 19.8 percent in 2010. Both Nelson and Stringer called for an increase in funding for the SAPT Block Grant and CMHS Block Grant as well as for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Sheriff Brian Gootkin of Gallatin County, Montana, said cuts to mental health and substance abuse programs have implications for public safety, using as an example an increase in contact between his officers and persons dealing with mental health issues due to the lack of mental health services. Dr. Mark Pearlmutter, Chair and Vice President of the Emergency Medicine Network and a member of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), said individuals with mental health issues are increasingly showing up in hospitals for care because mental health services are unavailable. Lindsey Glass, a Co-founder of Reach Out Recovery and a member of Faces and Voices of Recovery (FAVOR), spoke about her own experiences as an individual in long term recovery and the effect of stigma on those with substance use disorders.

Robert Morrison
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