



Volume; X Issue 1

Spring 2018

AT WAR WITH THE DINOSAURS

In spite of ineffective solutions from the federal administration to address the opiate crisis, New Jersey behavioral health advocates continue to take action on important legislation in an effort to create continued change regarding this major health concern. Successful federal efforts to diminish the Affordable Care Act and cut Medicaid mean less access to treatment. These federal cuts in funding also send a crystal clear message to the Garden State that it can expect little assistance from the national government in its struggle with this health emergency.

Meanwhile, on the home front, steps have been undertaken to deal in a more productive manner with the disease of addictions. New Jersey decision-makers can point with distinction to a number of largely positive reforms. In the 2016/17 legislative Term, more than a few improved policies were enacted. The following represent some of them:

S.1266 – Establish a permanent, statewide needle exchange program

S.384 – Require correctional facilities to provide prisoners with medications for chronic illnesses that were prescribed prior to incarceration

S.2964 – Prohibit residential substance use disorder treatment facilities and aftercare facilities (including sober living homes and halfway houses) from denying admission to a person on the basis that the individual is currently receiving medication assisted treatment

S.2721 – Implement person-first language and changes pejorative terminology in laws and regulations referring to individuals with substance use disorders

S.291 – Authorize health care providers to engage in telemedicine

S.295 – Authorize pharmacists to dispense opioid antidotes to patients without a prescription

S.307 – Create a Veterans’ Diversion Program to divert veterans and active duty service members, charged with non-violent offenses and experiencing behavioral health problems, away from the criminal justice system and in to appropriate therapy

A.3/S.3 – Mandate health insurance coverage for treatment of substance use disorders, and places certain restrictions on the prescribing of opioids



A.2619 – Require that certain prisoners with detainees (wanted for adjudication in another jurisdiction) be provided access to in-prison drug treatment programs

S.3307 – Revise procedures for expunging criminal records, including shortening some waiting periods for expungement eligibility and increasing the number of convictions that may be cleared.

Other legislation

As with any long-standing problem, the search for solutions must be on-going as well. Much has been done, and more has yet to be accomplished; however, that does not detract from any achievements to date. There are new proposals NCADD-NJ is advocating for in the 2018/19 legislative Term. Some of these include:

S.491 – Requires public and non-public secondary schools to annually conduct written or verbal substance use screening on all students using a particular screening program (SBIRT)

A.542/S.1830 – Requires high schools to stock naloxone, authorizes school nurses to administer it, and provides them with legal indemnification

A.1467 – Facilitates the establishment of four new peer-to-peer Recovery Community Centers

A.3456/S.2100 – Removes prohibition on voting by persons convicted of indictable offense who are on parole, probation or incarcerated

A.2031/S.1339 – Ensures health insurance coverage for behavioral health care services and enhances oversight and enforcement of mental health and addiction parity laws

A.216 – Requires police training for interactions with persons who may have behavioral health issues

S.1756 – Requires health benefits coverage for buprenorphine and naloxone under certain conditions

A.3292/S.2244 – Mandates that prescription opioid medications include a warning sticker advising patients of the risk of addiction and overdose



NCADD-NJ's volunteer Advocates spoke at each of the four legislative Hearings held in March and April on the proposed 2018/19 state Budget and urged full funding for quality addictions prevention, therapy and recovery resources. We are past the days when we needed to convince officials in authority that addiction treatment and recovery should be a vital concern. Our Advocates especially have stepped up their game and have made themselves an expert resource in helping to shape strategies that provide substantive and practical answers to the present health dilemma.

For more information about these bills visit <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/>