

NJAMHAA Expands to Represent Addiction Providers, Increase Its Voice

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Dr. Wentz explained that the missions and concerns of mental health and addiction treatment providers are nearly identical, with both focused on helping individuals lead productive lives of recovery, but struggling with inadequate funding to meet ever increasing demand and burdensome regulations.

Additionally, many of those served are in need of both mental health and addictions treatment, as nearly 60 percent of individuals with a substance abuse disorder have a co-occurring mental illness.

“Ensuring that the system of care works hand in hand and that government regulations support rather than hinder the delivery of services are key components to helping individuals on the road to recovery,” said Dr. Wentz.

“Particularly during National Alcohol and Addiction Recovery Month, it is important to recall the promise offered by effective treatment and services and the need to ensure timely access to these life-saving resources. Not only can treatment save lives, it can save enormous resources,” said Dr. Wentz, noting that for every dollar invested in addictions treatment, government and businesses can reap as much as \$12 in savings in other costs, such as the criminal justice system, dysfunctional families, disability and hospitals.

Nearly every individual has a friend, family member or co-worker affected by mental illness and/or an addiction disorder. One in five individuals has a mental illness, whereas 8 percent of those 12 and older have used an illegal drug. Additionally, according to a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2009 study, drug related deaths outnumbered auto fatalities in New Jersey, making it one of the top killers in the state. Community-based nonprofit addiction providers each year help approximately 54,000 New Jersey residents on their road to lives of recovery, but the vast majority of the adults who meet the diagnostic criteria for a substance use disorder do not obtain treatment.

“It is vital that New Jersey residents know about the services available, do not hesitate to seek help when needed and stress to their state and federal officials the importance of investing in treatment and services,” said Dr. Wentz.

NJAMHAA’s website, www.njamhaa.org, contains a listing of member providers, organized by county.