

[NJAMHAA Honors Gov. Christie for Fighting Stigma](#)

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The New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc. (NJAMHAA) recently recognized Governor Chris Christie with its *Leadership in Fighting Stigma* award for his public declaration that “Addiction is a treatable disease”.

“There is no greater tragedy than when someone who could enjoy a productive life with good health does not take the step to seek treatment for an addiction or mental illness because of shame and stigma,” said Debra L. Wentz, Ph.D., CEO of NJAMHAA, as she presented the award.

Dr. Wentz stated, “When a Governor speaks out about addiction like this, people listen. Individuals with substance use, mental health and co-occurring disorders struggle against a stigma imposed by society that undermines their own belief in themselves and devalues them as human beings. Governor Christie demonstrated exceptional courage and leadership when he declared that no family is immune from these disorders, accentuating their prevalence.”

Upon receiving the *Leadership in Fighting Stigma* award, Governor Christie stated, “When I took office, I promised to make New Jersey a better state for everyone, including our state’s most vulnerable citizens. Each life is precious and with the right approach and broad spectrum of treatment opportunities, individuals dealing with mental health and addiction can turn their lives around with dignity, bringing peace of mind and hope to their families.

“This is a personal issue for Mary Pat and me, and we will proudly continue to support those New Jerseyans struggling with mental health and addiction illness. I am deeply humbled to receive this award from the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies and I thank them for their tireless efforts in bringing awareness and providing services to individuals in need all across the Garden State.”

The *Leadership in Fighting Stigma* award is a unique award created for Governor Christie’s uncommon understanding and leadership of the issue of addictions and removing the shadow of stigma from this disease which can be treated and lead to productive lives where individuals work, are good parents and contribute positively to their communities.