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New York's Addiction Treatment and Prevention Community Launches 'Superstorm Opioids' Campaign and Calls for \$100 Million to Combat Opioid Pandemic

Nearly a decade of virtually flat funding has left front line substance use disorders workforce at a fraction of where it was during the crack/cocaine epidemic of the 1980's and 90s while opioid deaths related to prescription drugs, heroin, and fentanyl overdoses, and hospitalizations skyrocket

"We are using 'Superstorm Opioids' because what's desperately needed is a Sandy-level government response that aligns with reality - we are in the midst of a public health crisis of pandemic proportions. We need the Governor and the legislature to respond with the same resolve and resources they have with other disasters."

ALBANY N.Y. – The first named storm of 2018 has already made landfall, and it is far deadlier, costlier, and just as destructive as any weather event. It is 'Superstorm Opioids,' the most significant public health crisis in a generation, and there is no end in sight. While the levels of overdoses and deaths continue to skyrocket, funding to reverse the upward trajectory of this pandemic has been essentially flat.

The 'Superstorm Opioids' campaign seeks to bring a sense of urgency on par with government's proven response to recent natural disasters, which saw person-power, money, and years of coordinated recovery efforts to respond and rebuild. We need the same Sandy-level response to the opioid pandemic.

To ensure frontline prevention, treatment, and recovery providers have the resources that match the magnitude of the crisis, state government must invest \$100 million over the next two years to rebuild a workforce that is now at a fraction of where it was during the crack/cocaine epidemic of the 1980's and 90's. That epidemic was confined largely to urban areas, while 'Superstorm Opioids' is a pandemic that has no geographic or socioeconomic boundaries.

"We are using 'Superstorm Opioids' because what's desperately needed is a Sandy-level government response that aligns with reality - we are in the midst of a public health crisis of pandemic proportions," said ASAP Executive Direction John Coppola. "All the data shows that a status quo approach is a blueprint for disaster and it's a fact that resources have not been allocated in a manner that matches the magnitude of the emergency. The current state of affairs is woefully insufficient with upstate New York witnessing an astonishing 222 percent increase in admissions to OASAS certified treatment programs among those 18 to 24 for heroin and other opioids, and the same group in Long Island is up more than 240 percent. Good outcomes in the field requires a sustained effort with treatment and prevention providers working in tandem with state government."

In order to strengthen services and reverse the upward trajectory of addiction, deaths, and overdoses, we must address the workforce crisis by investing \$100 million on these initiatives:

Strengthen Prevention Services by Strengthening the Prevention Workforce (\$34.5M)

To bring the prevention workforce back to their peak level in 2009 and to address increased demand for prevention services created by the opioid pandemic, we must add 500 prevention professionals to New York's school and community-based prevention programs.

- 250 prevention professionals to be deployed in NYC public and parochial schools and 50 in public and parochial schools outside of NYC in high need schools particularly those that currently have NO prevention personnel
- 150 prevention professionals to be deployed to community-based prevention programs outside of NYC with emphasis on services in high-need communities and 50 prevention professionals to be deployed to community-based prevention programs in high-need NYC neighborhoods

Cost for 300 prevention professionals in NYC and 200 prevention professionals outside NYC is approximately \$34.5 million

Strengthen Treatment by Strengthening the Treatment Workforce (\$40.5M)

Support the equivalent of adding 600 treatment professionals to New York's continuum of treatment services to address the heroin/prescription opioid pandemic and the demands for treatment for persons addicted to alcohol and other drugs. Specifically:

- 150 treatment professionals to be deployed in NYC outpatient programs and 150 treatment professionals in outpatient programs outside of NYC to provide clinic based services and offsite outreach to homeless shelters, criminal justice facilities, hospitals and other setting where persons with addiction can be screened and referred for treatment
- 150 treatment professionals to be deployed in NYC inpatient and residential treatment programs and 150 treatment professionals to be deployed in inpatient and residential treatment programs outside of NYC to reduce the need for overtime and to enable enhanced services

Strengthen Recovery Services by Supporting the Recovery Services Workforce (\$3.5M)

Many counties in NYS do not have a recovery center to provide recovery supports to recovering persons and their families. Start-up funds should be added to the budget so that 10 more of these counties can create recovery centers.

Certified Recovery Peer Advocates and Certified Addiction Recovery Coaches (\$750K)

Recovery peers are increasingly in demand as New York adopts a recovery-oriented system of care. A peer workforce initiative should be funded to help train and certify 1000 new peer advocates and create infrastructure to support their entry into the SUD workforce including support for the New York Certification Board which certifies addiction recovery peers.

Strengthen the Substance Use Services Workforce (\$21M)

Provide \$21 million to support Substance Abuse Disorder workforce incentives such as student loan forgiveness; scholarships for training, education, and certification; and salary/hiring incentives that could help to attract and retain staff. To the extent possible, we should use funds from the asset forfeiture Substance Abuse Services Fund to support these incentives.

Strengthen Employee Benefits for the SUD Field

Substance use disorders service providers have seen dramatic increases in the cost of their health insurance and other employee benefits. The crippling impact of these increases has increased the burden on employees (high deductibles, increased share of premiums), resulting in staff leaving the field for better compensation opportunities. ASAP recommends making the state's health benefit package available to SUD service providers so that savings can be created and reinvested to address the heroin/prescription opioid crisis.

Support for the SUD workforce and the programs that comprise the core prevention and treatment services in all 62 counties of NYS is essential if we are to address the opioid pandemic with the level of effort necessary to reverse its course.

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About ASAP: The New York Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers (ASAP) works to support organizations, groups and individuals that prevent and alleviate the profound personal, social and economic consequences of substance use disorders in New York State. ASAP represents the interests of the largest continuum of substance use disorders prevention, treatment, and recovery service providers in the country.