



NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF ALCOHOLISM AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES
Addiction Services for Prevention, Treatment, Recovery
Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor
Arlene González-Sánchez, Commissioner

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OASAS Communicator

Dear Friends,

As we come to the end of the month of March, which is National Professional Social Work Month, the impact of more than 642,000 professional social workers in America should be recognized. This year's theme is "Social Work Matters" and as a social worker I take great pride in my commitment to the field of social work. Social workers are the voice for change and contribute so much to improving the lives of those we serve and the communities in which we work.

Sincerely,

*Arlene González-Sánchez
OASAS Commissioner*

Spring Somos Conference Held in Albany



Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez attended many sessions throughout this year's Spring Somos Conference held in Albany, New York from March 23-25, 2012. This year marked an important milestone as noted in the theme of the conference: '25 Years of Celebrating our History. Expanding our Horizon and Strengthening our Communities'. In addition to the Commissioner's participation in the conference, the OASAS exhibit booth was available for participants to access information about our services

and the addiction services credentials. OASAS Executive Deputy Commissioner, Kathleen Caggiano-Siino presented at a workshop on Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse.

"As the first Puerto Rican Commissioner of OASAS, it was an honor to represent our agency and interact with providers, policy makers

Programs

OASAS Mission:

To improve the lives of New Yorkers by leading a premier system of Prevention, Treatment, Recovery.

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Governor
Andrew M. Cuomo



and other organizations from all over the state." I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all the OASAS staff that assisted in ensuring our agency was well represented at this special event."

The New York State Assembly and Senate Puerto Rican/Hispanic Task Force was founded in 1987 by Puerto Rican legislators who made it their personal commitment to focus on the needs and concerns of the State's growing Hispanic Community. In the beginning the Task Force consisted of seven elected officials; it has grown to 19 legislators. These members are currently fighting for the rights and needs of the Hispanic Community in New York State.



ASAP Adolescent Youth Conference Held in Albany

On March 22-23, the Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers of NYS, Inc., hosted a 2012 Youth Summit at the Albany Marriott. This was the first of its kind where government workers, consumers and service providers from across the state met to exchange information and discuss cross-system collaborations that will strengthen partnerships and improve behavioral health care for adolescents, young adults and their families, particularly those with a co-occurring mental health disorder.



OASAS Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez opened the conference with a plenary session entitled, *"Working Together for New York's Youth."* Commissioner Sánchez was joined by Commissioner Michael Hogan from New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) and Commissioner Gladys Carrión from New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) to discuss effective services that will support adolescents and their families with a focus on cross-system collaborations. The three

Commissioner Arlene
González-Sánchez



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commissioners also shared their vision for how government can collaborate to improve outcomes and integrate services. A recurring theme during this session was the need to listen more to youth and their families if we are to successfully develop integrated services to meet their needs.

Over the course of the two days, the participants had the opportunity to attend several workshops from a broad cross-section of experts. One of the highlights was when adolescents and families members in recovery spoke at a plenary session about their stories. Participants heard first-hand some of the challenges faced by these families in accessing the services and care they needed.

Hopefully, this event marks the beginning of many new and emerging partnerships and also meaningful discussions on how we can provide the best possible care for our youth and their families. It is important and a priority for OASAS that we continue this dialogue, work through the challenges, and support our youth in the pursuit of a healthy and productive future.

OASAS was a co-sponsor of the Summit along with OMH, OCFS, Community Care and the New York National Guard.

State Health Commissioner Orders a Stop to the Sale of Synthetic Marijuana

New York State Health Commissioner Nirav R. Shah, M.D., M.P.H., has issued an order of summary action banning the sale of synthetic marijuana products in New York State. These substances, generally referred to as "synthetic marijuana", consist of plant material coated by chemicals that mimic THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. These products are being sold as a "legal alternative" to marijuana in convenience stores, smoke shops, and tobacco stores with brand names such as "Spice", "K2", "Mr. Nice Guy", and "Galaxy Gold".

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo called upon the Department of Health to take action to ban the sale of these dangerous products. The order states, "synthetic cannabinoids have been linked to severe adverse reactions, including death and acute renal failure, and commonly cause: tachycardia (increased heart rate); paranoid behavior, agitation and irritability; nausea and vomiting; confusion; drowsiness; headache; hypertension; electrolyte abnormalities; seizures; and syncope (loss of consciousness).

The Commissioner's order calls for sales and distribution of these products to cease immediately. And it calls upon local health officials to distribute the order and check for compliance.

Last week, the Commissioner sent special health alerts to local health departments, emergency departments and other health care providers to make them aware of the dangers of these products.

The order is available [here](#).

**Town Hall to be Held in Plattsburgh
Our Youth at Risk: Prescription and Synthetic Drug Abuse
A Crisis in the Making**

Richard S. Hartunian, United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York, in cooperation with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, Plattsburgh City School District, Plattsburgh Campus and Community Partnership, NYS Department of Health-Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, Plattsburgh Police Department, New York State Police, Clinton County Sheriff's Department, and the Clinton County District Attorney's Office cordially invite you to attend a:

Town Hall Meeting
April 18, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.
Plattsburgh High School
1 Clifford Drive, Plattsburgh, NY

Learn about the dangers of prescription and synthetic drugs; what law enforcement officials are seeing and its legal consequences; what treatment options are available; and how we as a community can deal with the abuse and downfalls. The problem is real:

- 1.5 million American youths have reported that they have abused prescription drugs.
- Everyday 2,700 teens try a prescription medicine to get high for the first time.

Stop by to meet Brody Hooper, an Elizabethtown-Lewis Central School Junior who is leading the charge against sale and use of synthetic cannabis (K2). Area treatment providers will also be on hand with informational materials.

**Commissioner Speaks at Acacia Network's
First Graduation Ceremony**

[Acacia Network](#) recently held their first graduation ceremony



celebrating the successful recovery treatment completion for graduates from all of their substance abuse treatment programs. The ceremony was held on the Lehman College Campus in

the Bronx on March 13, 2012.

The event was well attended by several hundred people including the family and friends of the graduates; the Acacia Board of Directors, Executives and supporting staff; VIPs; Government officials; and local community agency representatives and alumni. Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez addressed the audience of more than 100 graduates and congratulated them for taking the necessary steps toward rebuilding their lives.

For more than 30 years, the Acacia Network has been entrenched in the community, helping thousands of men and women to overcome substance use disorders, so that they can lead more healthy, productive and rewarding lives. Located in the South Bronx, Acacia Network, Inc. formerly Promesa/BASICS Systems now includes [Promesa](#), [BASICS](#) and [United Bronx Parents](#) (UBP). Promesa/Acacia is a provider of several chemical dependence, housing and HIV/AIDS programs, whose services, with the acquisition of UBP, include residential services for women. They currently serve 59 women and 97 children at La Casita 1 and La Casita 2. Additionally, UBP has an undetermined number of clients in the Outpatient program.

Acacia's mission is to integrate into one corporate umbrella the services to predominantly Hispanic/Latino population in New York, especially in the Bronx and continue to use a comprehensive, holistic approach to chemical dependence, mental health services, e.g., treatment of the whole person includes health care, housing, vocational services, job and family.

O-STARS

Mary I. Collier, LMSW, CASAC, has been a member of the OASAS team since November 2005.



Currently, she serves as an Addiction Program Specialist II for the OASAS Clinical Services Unit. Each and every day, Mary brings to OASAS her social work values, as well as extensive experience working in the child welfare system. Her unique view of how substance use disorders affect families, children and child welfare systems of care is an

asset to the clinical services unit and to OASAS.

Mary Collier is well known for her advocacy for family treatment. She led an effort to train clinical staff in family-oriented evidence based practices, including Celebrating Families! She maintains a commitment to fatherhood initiatives, interagency collaborations,

parenting education and other family supports. Mary enjoys working in a team environment and has a strong commitment to social work education. As a member of the New York State Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, she has been a strong supporter of social workers in the field and has contributed to recruiting social work students to OASAS over the past several years.

In 1995, Mary received her Masters in Social Work with a concentration in Child Welfare Practice from Syracuse University. She has more than 18 years of clinical and administrative experience working for the betterment of children and families. Before joining OASAS, Mary worked at the NYS Office for Children and Family Services for more than seven years in their Field Operations monitoring contracts, offering technical assistance and conducting site visits to provider agencies. Prior to that, Mary served as a high school social worker providing counseling, crisis intervention, student/family mediation, and individual and group therapy. Additionally, she worked for Schenectady County Department of Social Services as a children's services caseworker and as a clinician in private practice she specialized in the therapeutic treatment of pre-school children, adolescents and family therapy.

Mary plans to retire from state service this spring so that she can spend more time with her own family. We wish her happiness and good health in her retirement.

OASAS Medical Corner

Dr. Steven Kipnis, OASAS Medical Director

The OASAS Medical Corner is an ongoing part of each edition of the Communicator newsletter. It is intended to provide timely information regarding educational events, new research and/or updates that can lead to better performance by the field. Addiction Medicine is a dynamic and relatively new specialty and this column will help to filter some of this information.

OASAS Encourages OASAS Licensed Programs to have Staff Trained as Overdose Responders

A new life-saving law took effect in 2006, making it legal in New York State for non-medical persons to administer naloxone to another individual to prevent an opioid/heroin overdose from becoming fatal. Any adult who has been trained and furnished with naloxone is able to act as an overdose responder. All OASAS programs with prescribers on staff (physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants) are encouraged to register as programs which can train staff and patients in the use of naloxone.

OASAS also encourages staff at OASAS licensed programs without prescribers on staff to become trained as overdose responders so that they may be able to administer naloxone in the case of a

suspected opioid overdose. Sample policies and resources can be found on the OASAS [website](#).

Nicotine Vaccines

There are currently 1 billion tobacco smokers in the world, at least half of whom will eventually die from a smoking-related disease. Nicotine vaccines may be part of the answer when one is looking to assist in smoking cessation. T. Raupach et al in *Drugs* 2012:72 (4) present the current status of research. The functional idea behind the use of vaccines is that the antibodies that are produced, bind to the nicotine molecule and due to the increased size, the nicotine cannot cross into the brain (too large to penetrate the protective blood-brain barrier). Animal studies have shown a positive effect on self-administration and severity of withdrawal. However, five phase I/II clinical trials using vaccines against nicotine have been published and the results have been disappointing. Quit rates were increased only in those smokers with high antibody titers. However, the vaccines were well tolerated and capable of inducing an immune response. More research is needed, but someday vaccines may be part of a multidimensional approach to the treatment of tobacco dependence.

OASAS Commissioner Participates in the Annual Power of Social Work Conference in Albany

The National Association of Social Workers, New York Chapter, held its annual conference on March 16, 2012, in Albany. The event was attended by hundreds of social work practitioners, students and other members of the helping professions. This year's theme was *Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities of Health Care Reform*.

OASAS Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez participated as a panelist, along with Commissioners and representatives from various state agencies. During the morning plenary session entitled, "The Transformation of the Health and Mental Health Care Systems and Opportunities for Social Workers", the Commissioner's remarks were very well-received. The focus of this plenary was on the current and pending changes to our service delivery environment, implications to social work practice and considerations for the future of behavioral health and health service delivery systems of care.

OASAS Releases 2012 Interim Report

OASAS Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez recently announced the release of the agency's 2012 Interim Report on the Statewide Comprehensive Plan 2011-2015. The Interim Report summarizes significant accomplishments on the OASAS 2011 Outcomes Dashboard. The Dashboard is the foundation of our planning efforts and advances Commissioner González-Sánchez's commitment to better integrate outcomes management into the work of the agency

and the field. OASAS values your feedback and invites you to complete our online evaluation [survey](#).

OASAS Staff Member Thanked for Supporting American Service Men and Women

Karen Maikels, an OASAS staff member, has been collecting and packaging donations for *Care Packages* for American Service Men and Women serving overseas in war zones for the past 8 years.



One recipient, Petty Officer Greg Potter, a Navy Corpsman who served at Camp Leatherneck with the Marines in Afghanistan, was so touched by this that he wanted to do something to thank her.

He obtained a flag that had flown over Camp Leatherneck on September 11, 2011. He placed the flag in a display case and, along with a certification of authenticity from the Base Commander and presented it to Karen at OASAS on March 28. He also thanked her



for her dedication and support for our military. In presenting the flag, Petty Officer Potter remarked that he had not even known what OASAS was when he received the package, which was packed so abundantly that he shared the contents with others on the base. Karen, in typical fashion, asked him to send her names of others who could receive future Care Packages. Petty Officer Potter, of Glens Falls, recently returned

home and is retiring after 20 years with the Navy.

Congratulations to Karen for being recognized for her support of our American Service Men and Women!

LEAF to Celebrate 30th Anniversary and Second Annual Art and Poetry Competition

This year, the [LEAF Council on Alcoholism and Addictions](#) marks its 30th anniversary of serving the residents of Otsego County with substance abuse information, education and



referrals.

Please make plans to [join](#) them for the their *30th Anniversary Celebration and Second Annual Art and Poetry Competition* on Friday, April 27 from 6:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. in Oneonta, New York. There will be live poetry readings, live music and a wonderful reception with hors d'oeuvres. It will be an evening to remember!

LEAF Council on Alcoholism and Addictions is dedicated to helping create a community where children and adults can live in healthy environments that are free from the effects of alcoholism and other addictive diseases.

For questions and/or comments about this newsletter, please contact: Jannette Rondó, OASAS
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