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OASAS Mission:

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

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Arlene González-Sánchez
Commissioner
NYS OASAS



Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor

Dear Friends, I want to thank you for the wonderful support and responses we have received for our weekly newsletter. This week's highlights include continued site visits, the Assembly Prescription Drug Roundtable, OASAS 2011 Outcomes Dashboard and the Health Disparities Workgroup. I look forward to sharing other exciting initiatives with you in future issues.

Arlene González-Sánchez, OASAS Commissioner

**Commissioner Visits Russell E. Blaisdell and Richard C. Ward
Addiction Treatment Centers (ATCs)**



Blaisdell ATC Visit

they were receiving and how the staff is genuinely concerned and helpful.

OASAS Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez visited the [Russell E. Blaisdell ATC](#) on August 15 to meet with staff and patients and also to become more familiar with services specific to the ATC. During the tour, ATC Director Tamara Miller-Kammerer said, "We are proud to share our rich history with the Commissioner where in 1939, Bill Wilson and Russell E. Blaisdell met and initiated the first A.A. meeting at this facility." Currently, the ATC offers an integrated model of care for individuals presenting with a co-occurring traumatic brain injury. Commissioner Sánchez also had the opportunity to spend time with a group of patients where they shared some of their struggles and expressed their appreciation for the treatment



Ward ATC Visit

In the afternoon, the Commissioner then travelled to [Richard C. Ward ATC](#) where she had the opportunity to meet with the staff and patients, as well as tour the facility. One of the special program highlights was that the Ward ATC was the first ATC to accept methadone maintained clients in the late 1980s and the first ATC to accept women with children. It also offers an innovative alternative treatments program on the evening shift called InnerVisions consisting of an array of meditative disciplines, soci-drama, and art therapy workshops, including individual art therapy. After the Commissioner heard from the staff about what they do, the patients then validated the importance of their work. The patients described for the Commissioner the patient-center care that they are receiving at Ward ATC. One of the woman expressed she had discovered additional health issues that she wasn't aware of prior to treatment, but now feels she has a plan for herself that will help her initiate a solid plan for recovery.

Assemblyman Cymbrowitz Holds Prescription Drug Roundtable

Several certified treatment providers, along with the OASAS Medical Director, Dr. Steven Kipnis, participated in a roundtable discussion on prescription drug misuse by adolescents at the invitation of Assemblyman Steven Cymbrowitz. Assemblyman Cymbrowitz chairs the Assembly Committee on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. The roundtable was held on August 9, 2011. The OASAS providers included Dynamic Youth Community; Camelot of Staten Island; Horizon Health Services, Inc.; and Phoenix House, as well as the Partnership for Drug Free America, healthcare leaders, Drug Court and the special narcotics prosecutor for New York City.

According to [2009 SAMHSA National Survey on Drug use and Health \(NSDUH\)](#), an estimated 20.6 percent of people in the United States (51.8 million people age 12 and older), have used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons.

Dr. Kipnis said, "The roundtable brought out the need for all of us to look at our roles in addressing this growing problem. Parents, healthcare professionals, schools, the substance abuse prevention and treatment community and government can all make a difference if we work together. Parents need to educate themselves about which medications can be misused, communicate the risks to their children and safeguard their medications. Healthcare practitioners need to communicate, be honest with their patients about risks, and be vigilant. Schools from middle school to medical school need to educate and the provider network needs to be readily available to offer help."

OASAS has created [A Medicine Cabinet Inventory](#) designed to track prescription and over-the-counter medicines in the home. It is a valuable tool for parents and family members to keep track of medications as incorrect dosing and mixing of these medications can be deadly. OASAS has also partnered with other state agencies on many initiatives, such as the state Department of Health. The initiatives have included the Practitioner Notification Program, Prescription Opioid Addiction Treatment Education and Intervention, Health Advisories and has provided guidelines for prescribers on responsible medication prescribing.

The roundtable discussion not only informed the Assemblyman on prescription opiates, but set up goals for future roundtables and how the Assembly could approach this issue. A media article from the Epoch-times.com, "[Coping With Teen Painkiller Addiction](#)", covered the discussion.

O-STARS

OASAS was pleased to have the opportunity to be involved in the [City of Albany Summer Youth Employment Program](#) and work with two dedicated and hard-working students, Allison Agneta and Megan Murphy. Allison and Megan each worked a four-hour shift each day for five weeks providing administrative and clerical support, assisting in writing projects and creating graphic design for critical agency initiatives.



Megan Murphy

The Summer Youth Employment Program is designed to provide any young person, age 14-18, with a positive summer work experience that allows them to gain skill sets, understand the workplace and establish relationships to prepare them for a future career. The program runs during the months of July and August, and employs some 1,400 students to work in the community every Summer.

Megan Murphy touched on her experience working at OASAS, "OASAS has been a fantastic summer job placement - the opportunity to learn about how a communications department operates was worth so much more than pay-checks. I'm grateful to have worked with such welcoming people, who let me work on tasks that mattered and allowed me to challenge myself. Thanks so

much!"

Allison Agneta said, "It was a fun working experience at OASAS. I learned you should not drink until age 21, and you should not use a fake ID to get into a bar."



Allison Agneta

On their last day at OASAS, Allison and Megan were presented an "OASAS Making a Difference Award" signed by the Commissioner for the difference made in support of the OASAS mission and for their administrative assistance on behalf of OASAS through the City of Albany Youth Program.

Commissioner Announces OASAS 2011 Outcomes Dashboard

As part of the commitment to integrate outcomes management into the operations of the agency and the field, OASAS Commissioner Sánchez announces the availability of the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) 2011 Outcomes Dashboard on the [agency website](#).

The Dashboard identifies 12 key metrics that reflect agency-wide priorities and includes five new priorities for this year. The 12 key metrics include 39 sub-metrics that serve as short-term goals by which progress can be measured. It is important to note that not all of OASAS' work is included on the agency-wide Dashboard, as many important functions and initiatives are tracked at the Division and unit levels.

During the coming months, OASAS will be reaching out to providers and counties to further strengthen our collaboration including the incorporation of county and provider priorities in the 2012 Outcomes Dashboard.

Governor Signs Legislation Relating to OASAS

On August 3, 2011, Governor Cuomo signed Chapter 265 into law. The new law requires OASAS, in consultation with the state Department of Health (DOH), to provide and publish educational materials for health care providers regarding screening, assessment, and diagnosis of women for alcoholism and chemical dependency. Assemblyman Jaffe sponsored the bill (A.1078), along with Senator Hassell-Thompson (S. 3279).

Chapter 283, of Laws 2011 renames the advisory council on underage alcohol consumption and authorizes the council to address issues of substance abuse among youth. The council shall consist of twenty-one members, who represent a broad group of stakeholders in the effort to combat underage alcohol consumption and youth substance abuse. The members will serve two-year terms. A report to the governor, temporary president of the senate and the speaker of the assembly will be submitted by October 1, 2012. The bill was sponsored by Assemblyman Cymbrowitz (A.6815) and Senator Klein (S. 4846).



For information on **grant and funding opportunities**, visit the OASAS [website](#) (www.oasas.ny.gov/hps/grants/index.cfm).

OASAS Commissioner Serves as Co-Chair on OASAS' First Health Disparities Workgroup

Commissioner Sánchez serves as Co-Chair of OASAS' first Health Disparities Workgroup along with Elizabeth Swain, Chief Executive Officer of Community Health Care Association of New York State. A key element of Governor Cuomo's 2011-2012 budget was to identify ways to reduce cost and increase quality and efficiency in Medicaid programs. On January 5, 2011, Governor Cuomo issued an Executive Order aimed at redesigning New York's outsized Medicaid program. The order called for the creation of a Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) to uncover ways to save money and improve quality within the Medicaid program for the 2011-12 State Budget. The Team was tasked with reducing \$2.35 billion from Medicaid expenditures and engaged stakeholders and citizens in ways never done before in New York State. More than 4,000 ideas were received in less than two months. As a result, several sub-committees were identified, of which, the Health Disparities Workgroup is one of them. This work is related to MRT recommendation #990, to Explore the Establishment of Reimbursement Rates to Support Efforts to Address Health Disparities.



The members are charged to address health disparities among people with disabilities, including substance use disorders and psychiatric disabilities, and their need for equal access to primary and preventive health care services. The first public meeting was held on August 9 in Albany at OASAS. Five topic-specific workgroups were identified to develop concrete proposals: 1. Health Homes; 2. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer; 3. Disparities Impact Assessment; 4. Safety Net Providers – Financial Stability Analysis and Impact on Disparities; 5. Access – Structural practices that may impeded access/promote disparities (to include immigrant and linguistic minority access).

Commissioner Sánchez said, "The State of New York is committed to providing access to quality physical and behavioral health services with a strong emphasis on decreasing health disparities amongst our most vulnerable neighbors and family members. This knowledgeable team of experts and recipients of services are charged with recommending a framework to the Governor that increases access to Medicaid services to all New Yorkers in need."

The Commissioner conveyed to the members that from her own experiences in working with healthcare disparities, we need to incentivize the provider to provide appropriate services to the disparities community and also incentivize the recipient to access services. She noted that this is a two-way street. Commissioner ended by indicating it is her hope that the group can propose several critical reforms that will reduce health care disparities; improve patient outcomes and lower healthcare costs.

The Workgroup membership includes individuals from a range of racial and ethnic groups and community-based organizations with experience serving them; the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation; other safety net providers; community-based immigrant groups; and legal services representatives. A Medicaid recipient, Diana Babcock, was recently featured in the Times Union article "[State seeks savings with health homes](#)" sits on a subcommittee of the state's [Medicaid Redesign Team](#).

The workgroup members are tasked with the following:

- Advise the state Department of Health (DOH) on initiatives, including establishment of reimbursement rates, to support providers' efforts to offer culturally competent care and undertake measures to address health disparities based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender expression.
- Advise DOH about incorporating interpretation and translation services to patients with limited English proficiency and who are hearing impaired.
- Explore issues related to charity care and the uninsured.

The next public meeting for the Health Disparities Workgroup is scheduled for Friday, September 16, 2011, at the New York State Department of Health New York City offices, 90 Church Street.

OASAS Becomes First State Agency to Complete the Lean Government Project

In August, with *pro bono* assistance from the Center for Economic Growth, a local business training group, OASAS completed the first *Lean Government Project* in a New York State agency at no cost to the state.

Lean Government refers to the application of Lean production principles and methods to identify and implement the most efficient and value added way to provide government services. Government agencies in other states have found that Lean methods enable them to better understand how their processes work, to quickly identify and implement improvements, and to build a culture of continuous improvement. The OASAS "*new services procurement process*" was the focus of this first project. The lack of significant experience with these types of procurements combined with changes in requirements and a few key retirements had created a situation that called for a rigorous examination of the process and suggested a great potential for improvements.

The results of this first Lean project were impressive with improvements in *cycle time* (the total time from start to finish of a process) and *process time* (the amount of hands on work by staff) ranged from 30 percent to 57 percent when compared to recent experiences and anticipated improvements. The implications of applying *lean* thinking to other OASAS processes are currently being considered with several new projects now underway. Other state agencies have also expressed interest in using lean as well. Providers and counties interested in learning more about lean government should contact [Bill Phillips](#) or [Connie Burke](#).

For questions or comments about this newsletter, please contact:

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