

Fostering Science-Driven Policy-Making in Addiction: Teams from South Dakota, Utah, Virginia and West Virginia Participate in Addiction Studies Program

NIDA-Funded Workshop Points States to Science-Based Prevention and Treatment Models as they Work to Integrate Addiction Services with Health Reform and Parity Initiatives - Within Adverse State Budget Situations

May 4, 2011; Philadelphia: Four teams of high-level executive and legislative branch decision makers from South Dakota, Utah, Virginia and West Virginia have completed a late-April policy development workshop offered by the Addiction Studies Program for the States ("ASP").

ASP is a NIDA funded educational series bringing cutting-edge, policy relevant research and other expert findings to help states develop effective substance use/abuse policies. The program was co-founded and is directed by David Friedman, Ph.D. of the Wake Forest University School of Medicine and Sue Rusche from National Families in Action. Friedman and Rusche started ASP in 1999 as a journalist series that continues to this day. In 2005 they brought on the Treatment Research Institute and National Conference of State Legislatures to establish a separate ASP series for state legislators, and by 2007, the team had created the current format.

This year's workshop was influenced by federal health reform initiatives (Affordable Care Act and the Mental Health Parity Act) and the opportunities they present for substance use/abuse programming at the state level. Also weighing heavily on everyone's minds – participants as well as ASP project staff – was the negative fiscal situation confronting most states this year.

Friedman and Rusche spoke to the issue of why the workshops go forward even in the face of serious fiscal constraints facing the states. "If ASP is advocating for anything, it is for the need for states to address substance use and abuse, and to do so with programs shown to be effective," they said.

The policymakers participated April 28 – 30 in Washington, D.C. Like all ASP workshops, the session was 2.5 days in length and consisted of presentations by leading researchers and other experts along with break-out sessions where facilitators help the teams discuss and incorporate instructional content into plans they develop on-site, all plans based on unique state priorities. If they so choose, each team can also receive follow-up telephone assistance for six months following the session to help them with plan implementation.

For more information, visit the project web site at www.addictionstudies.org.