

# NEWS RELEASE



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## **NCADD-New Jersey launches campaign to press for addiction treatment; proposed beer tax hike would generate \$7.5 million**

TRENTON ... (May 13, 2009) – The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey (NCADD-NJ) today held a press conference at the Statehouse to launch an advocacy and media campaign aimed at Closing the Addiction Treatment Gap. A key component of the launch is a proposed increase in the state's tax on beer to raise \$7.5 million for treatment services. NCADD-NJ also released a report outlining the state's treatment gap and the \$3 billion in savings New Jersey would see if it met the treatment needs of residents.

The number of state residents demanding treatment but not able to access it exceeds 50,000, 9,400 of whom are adolescents. The need for treatment in New Jersey is far larger: there are 805,000 residents who have a drug or alcohol problem and need treatment, with only 7 percent of those being admitted.

In keeping with a central theme of the campaign that 'addiction is disease and should be treated like one,' NCADD-NJ Director of Public Affairs John Hulick emphasized that addiction has long been recognized by the American Medical Association as a chronic disease. Hulick cited data showing that addicted patients respond to treatment at least as well as patients with other chronic diseases, such as diabetes or hypertension.

The tax increase proposal was spurred by the news that Gov. Jon Corzine's budget contained a tax increase on spirits and wine but exempted beer. NCADD-NJ is urging a modest tax increase on beer and having the new revenue dedicated to addiction treatment. An excise tax increase of five cents per gallon of beer would generate \$7.5 million for treatment, which would go to the Alcohol Education, Rehabilitation, and Enforcement Fund (AEREF). The fund disburses treatment dollars to counties, which often exhaust their allocation by mid-year. The AEREF's appropriation of \$11 million has not been increased since 1992, the same year of the last alcohol tax increase in the state.

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## NCADD-NJ

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NCADD-NJ has polled citizens and found that 70 percent of state residents support a dedicated alcohol tax hike. Hulick said, “The proposed beer tax is modest – a nickel a gallon – which is imposed on distributors, not the consumer. It is a partial remedy to the state’s treatment gap and is an investment that will more than pay for itself.”

NCADD-NJ’s polling shows that three in four residents of the state know someone who has had a drug or alcohol problem. Furthermore, Hulick noted that the agency’s survey shows “one in three people in the state know someone in recovery from addiction.” These individuals, Hulick said, have been restored to their families, their communities and their jobs. He added that these are the human faces on the huge savings that would result from expanding treatment. The savings would be seen in the areas of criminal justice, worker productivity and public health dollars.

The primer on the state’s treatment gap contains stories of families who have been directly affected by the state’s inadequate treatment capacity. One of the anecdotes recounts the death by overdose of Christian Foster, who had been on a waiting list for treatment. Since his death, his mother, Kass Foster, has worked with an addiction support group, Parent-to-Parent, that assists families who have an addicted son or daughter, trying to get them into treatment. She observed that addiction “is the only disease that you have to wait in line for a bed. It’s an epidemic.”

Over the course of the campaign, NCADD-NJ will release a series of studies on the effects of addiction treatment, the next one being an examination of treatment vs. incarceration. The state has already begun to see significant benefits of treating rather than imprisoning non-violent offenders through its drug court program. There will also be a case study focusing on Newark, where NCADD-NJ’s Closing the Addiction Gap partner, the Nicholson Foundation, is located. For more information on the campaign, visit [AddictionTreatmentNJ.org](http://AddictionTreatmentNJ.org).

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*NCADD-NJ is a non-profit organization that for more than a quarter century has dedicated itself to educating New Jersey’s citizens and law-makers about alcohol and drug use issues, to advocating on state policies concerning individuals addicted to alcohol or other drugs, and to reducing the stigma that frustrates a public health approach to the disease of addiction. More information about the council is available at its website, [www.ncaddnj.org](http://www.ncaddnj.org).*

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