

NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence – New Jersey
1675 Whitehorse-Mercerville Road, Suite 205, Hamilton, NJ 08619

CONTACT: Daniel Meara
609.689.0121 x 102
dmeara@ncaddnj.org

NCADD-New Jersey Responds to National Poll Revealing Addiction's Impact on a Majority of Residents Nationwide

TRENTON ... (May 14, 2004) – The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey, which has commissioned two state-wide surveys revealing the widespread effects of addiction on New Jersey residents, has seen its findings at the state level reflected in new national polling. The council, which for more than two decades has dedicated itself to overcoming stigma towards addiction, has most recently drawn attention to the issue through its facilitation of a discrimination panel identifying areas where bias is manifested, including healthcare, employment and housing.

The groundbreaking national survey released today finds that people in long-term recovery from addiction to alcohol or other drugs face widespread stigma and discrimination, a fact NCADD-NJ knows well through its own research. Overwhelming majorities in the polling show that discrimination against people in recovery is a problem in the United States today and that policies and attitudes need to be changed. A majority of those surveyed (63 percent) in today's national poll said there had been a great deal or some impact on their own lives as a result of grappling with addiction, and for most of them (72 percent of those who have been impacted) the addiction was among a family member.

“The national findings mirror what we at NCADD-NJ have seen in the state through Eagleton Institute polling we commissioned each of the past two years,” John Hulick, the council's director of Public Affairs and Policy, said. “Three in four residents of the state know someone with an alcohol or drug problem. Even closer to home, 35 percent of state residents said a member of their family had had a such a problem.”

“These individuals, who are beginning to live fulfilling lives free of alcohol and drugs, have that challenge compounded by the effects of stigma. Only last month, at a hearing before the state's Addiction Discrimination Panel, we heard from residents in recovery recounting their experiences of denied healthcare, lost employment, and harassment. The aim of the panel is to make recommendations to address this persistent attitude.”

Peter D. Hart Research Associates and Robert M. Teeter's Coldwater Corporation conducted the national poll from April 19-22, 2004. The poll surveyed a nationally representative sample of 801 American adults. The national poll is the first-ever comprehensive survey of the general public on stigma, discrimination and other barriers to recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs.

Two-thirds of the Americans believe that a stigma exists toward people in recovery from addiction to alcohol or other

-more-

IMPACT

PAGE TWO

drugs after stigma is defined as “something that detracts from the character or reputation a person, a mark of disgrace.”

A significant minority (27 percent) admits they would be less likely to hire someone who was in long-term recovery from addiction, and strong majorities say that discrimination in the workplace (80 percent) and the availability of health insurance for people seeking recovery (75 percent) is a problem in the United States today. In new polling done in New Jersey, 46 percent of respondents said they considered alcohol and drug addiction to be mainly a personal weakness.

“This poll strongly illustrates the barriers and roadblocks that people face as they strive to improve their lives and participate in community life,” said Patricia Taylor, campaign coordinator for Faces & Voices of Recovery.

“Discrimination is very much a factor in the lives of millions of Americans who are in recovery—those who have been addicted to alcohol or other drugs but are now free of their addiction.”

The public shows a strong preference for policies that treat addiction as a health rather than a law enforcement issue. For example, more than eight out of ten people (81 percent—including 85 percent of Democrats and 80 percent of Republicans) say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate for Congress who favored reallocating what the government spends on the war on drugs to place more emphasis on drug prevention, education, treatment and recovery programs. The same proportion would more likely back a candidate who expanded treatment programs for drug users.

Likewise, most in New Jersey favored a public health over a law enforcement approach to non-violent offenders. A large majority (89 percent) supported treatment over prison for non-violent offenders; they also strongly favored (75 percent) leaving to a judge’s discretion the sentencing of non-violent offenders in place of imposing mandatory minimums.

“This poll signals a sea change in the way America believes policymakers should be addressing addiction issues,” said lead researcher, Allan Rivlin, a senior vice president with Peter D. Hart Research Associates. “The survey reveals a public that is willing to look at recovery from addiction in new ways. The public is ready to stop blaming the victim and start treating the disease of addiction.”

“We know that millions of Americans are in long-term recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs,” said Taylor. “We know that recovery is an achievable goal; that people in recovery are leading productive lives.”

NCADD-NJ has more than 20 years’ experience educating New Jersey’s citizens about alcohol and drug use issues, advocating on state policies concerning individuals addicted to alcohol or other drugs, and working 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. In addition, a project of NCADD-NJ, Friends of Addiction Recovery-New Jersey (FOAR-NJ), was established for the express purpose of making recovery visible by celebrating and promoting recovery and overcoming stigma. FOAR-NJ’s website is www.friendsofrecoverynj.org.

Faces & Voices of Recovery is working to mobilize, organize and rally the families, friends and allies of the millions of Americans in recovery from addiction in a campaign to: end discrimination; broaden social understanding; and achieve a just response to addiction as a public health crisis. For more information, visit: www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org.

###