

NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE – NEW JERSEY
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NCADD-NJ Presents Eagleton Survey Findings on Addiction Issues as Spur to Legislative Action

MERCERVILLE ... (August 21, 2002) -- The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-New Jersey's Director of Public Affairs and Policy John Hulick at a State House press conference today announced the release of an Eagleton Institute survey on addiction issues and, with the Legislature about to reconvene, urged state policy-makers to act on findings of residents having widespread concern about addiction and showing firm support for providing sufficient treatment for alcoholism and other drug addiction.

"The survey offers policy-makers clear markers in terms of the public's views on the most pressing issues concerning addiction and recovery. Now it is up to the state's elected officials to respond with solutions to these issues, treatment shortages being foremost among them," Hulick said.

Hulick discussed several remedies through which the state could meet the need for treatment for addiction, the most economically – and therefore politically - viable being insurance parity for addiction because the costs would not have to be borne by the public sector. Hulick explained that under the current circumstances, with health management organizations denying or limiting treatment for addictive diseases, the state has to disburse treatment and prevention dollars to providing coverage instead of to expand treatment capacity with inpatient facilities and outpatient care. The poll reveals that 79 percent of New Jerseyans agree that insurance companies should be required cover treatment for addiction to the same extent as diabetes or heart disease. Parity would change this formula in that private health insurers would have to assume more of the coverage burden. Legislation that would mandate parity has been introduced in both houses (S-1520, A-2379) and is likely to come for a vote in the fall.

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Hulick said that the survey also shows residents supporting an increase in alcohol taxes to fund treatment and prevention. In fact, Seventy percent of residents favor raising the tax on alcohol and having that revenue dedicated to additional programs for addiction prevention and care. Drawing comparisons with the cigarette tax, Hulick said that a by-product of an increased alcohol tax would be to create a price barrier to underage drinkers, noting that alcohol remains the drug of choice among teenagers.

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