

NGA Releases Brief Addressing Impact of Substance Abuse

WASHINGTON - With the fiscal situation in many states still bleak, the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices released its "Substance Abuse: State Actions to Aid Recovery" Issue Brief to state health care and substance abuse officials. The brief describes the impact of substance abuse on state health costs, economic productivity, and the well-being of individuals and families, while highlighting actions governors and state policymakers can take to prevent and treat substance abuse and chemical dependency.

Among the policy recommendations outlined in the brief is the recognition of the parallels between chemical addiction and other chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and asthma. Twenty four states have conducted studies demonstrating that long-term substance abuse treatment is a cost-effective means of reducing criminal activity, increasing employment and worker retention, improving physical and mental health and strengthening family and social functioning.

"We know that substance abuse is a serious problem facing every state," Idaho Governor and NGA Vice-Chairman Dirk Kempthorne said. "Not only are there fiscal costs, but substance abuse creates tremendous societal costs through increased criminal activity, increased domestic violence, increased child neglect and reduced worker productivity. Once again, states have taken the lead in demonstrating the innovative solutions to this long-term national problem."

Additional policy recommendations include:

coordinating stakeholder resources to create and sustain substance-abuse policies; implementing cost-effective programs to prevent, reduce and minimize the incidence of drug and alcohol abuse; encouraging private insurers to offer adequate coverage for treatment of chemical dependency; leveraging federal funds to expand coverage for substance abuse treatment services; and requiring effective and sustainable treatment alternatives as part of sentencing for chemically dependent offenders. "The costs and social ramifications of drug use are not a new story to state health officials," said John Thomasian, Director of the NGA Center for Best Practices. "What is encouraging are the successful results that states are experiencing by treating chemical addiction as a long-term chronic illness and through better coordination of the resources at their disposal. While it remains a challenge for policymakers to understand the distinction between chronic illness and personal behavior, the success of such efforts from a budgetary and outcomes standpoint is significant."

To read the issue brief click [here](#):

[Substance Abuse: State Actions to Aid Recovery](#)

Contact: Patrick MacElroy, 202/624-5364
Office of Public Affairs

