

MODEL PARENT PANEL RESOLUTION

POLICY STATEMENT

NOVEMBER 19, 2011

Alcohol and other drug abuse and addiction are closely linked with the three leading causes of teen deaths: unintentional injuries (accidents), homicides and suicides. See *Adolescent Substance Abuse: America's #1 Health Problem*, pp 51-53, (CASA 2011). It is closely linked to serious and widespread public health issues that today's teenagers face, including depression, violence, sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancies, accidents, injuries and chronic health problems. *Id.* This toll makes intolerable our nation's collective failure to move aggressively to identify their disease and get them into addiction treatment.

Drug and alcohol addiction treatment has proven highly effective at helping people – adults and children alike – recover from their addiction. At the same time, parents of addicted children suffer, with their children, through the excruciating process of denial and painful discovery along a typically tortuous path to treatment. Once denial – their own and the child's – has given way to knowledge and acceptance, there remains the high stakes battle in which parents invest time, money and resources in desperate attempts to place their children in the right treatment facilities. Too many children don't make it. And even if parents find the right program, funding and access to insurance benefits remains a major obstacle.

In most instances parents struggle mightily to get help for their children, but simply have no way to recognize the disease of addiction that's afflicting their children, no way to know the kind of treatment that would help them, no way to know where to find that treatment, and no way to know how to secure the coverage they're entitled to from their behavioral health managed care plan (which is almost certain to give them the runaround).

The Model Parent Panel Resolution addresses this problem by providing a method for policy makers to listen in on the struggles of parents seeking help for their children. Through the use of the parent panels, policy makers will be able to tap into the hard-won experience of parents, in designing targeted informational campaigns, outreach strategies to identify families and kids in trouble and to improve access to addiction treatment.

The Model Parent Panel Resolution accomplishes these goals by directing the Single State Authority on Drugs and Alcohol to assemble a diverse panel of parents of children who have been affected by drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, to meet at least three times a year (with reasonable travel expenses covered) to advise and make recommendations to the Single Statue

Authority and to the appropriate legislative committees, on obstacles blocking access to drug and alcohol addiction treatment.

Finally, there can be no better, more motivated experts on gaining access and removing obstacles to treatment for teenagers than the parents who have spent months or even years struggling to get this into treatment. Parents who have faced these issues are eagerly standing by to provide this critical guidance. For this reason, it is imperative that policy makers and implementers take time to draw upon this special expertise to ensure that the laws, regulations and practices of state government are effective in *restoring* our beloved children to a healthy and safe condition.