

Addiction Leadership Group

October 18, 2005

The Honorable Joe Barton, Chair
House Committee on Energy
and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Dingell, Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy
and Commerce
564 Ford House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Barton and Ranking Member Dingell:

On behalf of the following national organizations interested in addiction treatment, prevention, education, research and recovery, thank you for your leadership to further develop a federal response to Hurricane Katrina. We appreciate your efforts to address the current and future needs related to disaster programming.

We are writing to respectfully ask that Congress take action to strengthen Section 416 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (P.L. 100-707). In particular, please support the inclusion of substance abuse as a distinct component of any comprehensive disaster related counseling program – including activities authorized in Section 416 of the Stafford Act.

As you know, Section 416 of the Stafford Act authorizes funding for the Crisis Counseling Training and Assistance Program (CCP). While the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds the program, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) provides technical assistance, program guidance and oversight. CMHS notes that the purpose of the program is to help people understand that "emotional reactions to a disaster are normal and to help them develop appropriate coping skills so that they can resume their pre-disaster level of functioning." In addition, CMHS notes that the program also "assists in the identification and referral of individuals who may need services outside the scope of the CCP."

As noted by the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD) in a recently released Policy Brief, "Trauma and Substance Use: Implications for the Response for Hurricane Katrina/Rita," studies have shown that traumatic events can have a significant impact on the publicly funded substance abuse prevention and treatment system. Specifically, research found that substance use increased significantly after the terrorist attacks of September 11th and the bombing of the Murrow Building in Oklahoma City. It is important to note that the children in families impacted by Oklahoma City were traumatized not only by the bombing itself, but also by the trauma-related substance use of their parents. In addition, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) recently noted, "Studies have reported that individuals exposed to stress are more likely to abuse alcohol and other drugs or undergo relapse (Stress and Substance Abuse: National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), 2005)."

We believe these recommendations will strengthen our collective response to future disasters by distinctly acknowledging in statute the fact that trauma is a significant risk factor in substance use. Further, we believe these recommendations will improve our efforts to help children impacted by disasters and therefore prevent drug and alcohol use from becoming a problem in the first place.

Thank you very much for your consideration. We look forward to working with you on this and other issues in the near future.

Should you have any questions, or require additional information, please contact Robert Morrison, Director of Public Policy at the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD) at (202) 293-0090 x 106 or a representative from any one of the following organizations.

Sincerely,

American College of Mental Health Administration (ACMHA)

American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM)

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA)

Ensuring Solutions for Alcohol Problems

Faces and Voices of Recovery

Johnson Institute

Legal Action Center (LAC)

NAADAC – The Association for Addiction Professionals

National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA)

National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers (NAATP)

National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors (NASADAD)

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD)

Partnership for Recovery

State Associations of Addiction Services (SAAS)

Therapeutic Communities of America (TCA)

Cc: Members, House Committee on Energy and Commerce