

MEDIA ADVISORY

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New Hampshire December 2 Presidential Town Hall meeting "A Healthier and Safer New Hampshire: Solving our Alcohol and Drug Problem"

New attitudes and policies could safeguard residents' health and build safer communities

WHAT: 82% of New Hampshire adults personally know a relative, friend, or someone at work who has had a problem with alcohol or other drugs according to the University of New Hampshire Survey Center.

Presidential Town Hall meeting "A Healthier and Safer New Hampshire" to introduce Presidential candidates to issues of concern to individuals and families supporting policies to promote prevention, treatment and recovery from addiction.

Today, serious gaps exist in our nation's ability to identify and treat people with alcohol and drug problems, keeping millions of Americans from contributing to our society. We know that people can and do recover from addiction to alcohol and other drugs. Effective health responses to addiction – that prevent and treat problems and support people in long-term recovery, will safeguard our nation's health and build safer communities.

Presidential candidates have been invited to speak at various times during the event and answer questions from area residents.

There will also be an educational program including excerpts from HBO's Emmy award winning program *Addiction* and remarks from community leaders.

WHO: People in long-term recovery from addiction, their families, friends and allies; elected officials; law-enforcement officials.

WHERE: Timberlane Regional Performing Arts Center, 40 Greenough Road, Plaistow, NH

WHEN: Sunday, December 2, 2007 at 3:00 pm

TICKETS: Free tickets required for admission. Call 603.382.6541 x 243 to reserve tickets.

SPONSORS:

New Hampshire:

Friends of Recovery-NH (FOR-NH)
FASTER (Families Advocating Substance Abuse Treatment,
Education & Recovery),
Timberlane Regional School District
New Hampshire Alcohol and Other Drug Service Providers
Association
New Hampshire Taskforce on Women and Recovery
SAD CAFE
Sanborn/Timberlane Safe and Drug Free Community Coalition

National:

CADCA (Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America)
NAADAC: The Association for Addiction Professionals
Faces & Voices of Recovery – Recovery Voices Count

BACKGROUND:

Now is the time for Presidential candidates to inform New Hampshire voters and the American public about the steps that they will take to adopt meaningful health policy reforms that will save tens of thousands of lives and billions of dollars – and strengthen families and communities.

The following information and questions for candidates reflect key issues facing people in New Hampshire.

In 2006 111,000 New Hampshire residents needed but did not receive treatment for alcohol and drug problems. New Hampshire providers of addiction treatment and recovery services report a 3 to 6 week waiting period for residents needing residential treatment.

1). Untreated addiction is the cause of other problems and illnesses like heart disease, lower work productivity, and overcrowded jails and broken families. Yet millions of Americans can't access the treatment and recovery services they need. If elected, will you support an increase in funding to ensure that treatment and recovery services are available to all who need them?

Over half of the youth involved with New Hampshire's juvenile justice system also have a problem with substance abuse. Nearly 95 percent of young people entering the Youth Development Center, New Hampshire's juvenile detention facility, report they have used alcohol or other drugs. It is estimated that more than 2,000 young offenders have alcohol or drug problems, yet fewer than 500 have access to services to treat these

problems. In state-by-state rankings by the US Department of Health and Human Services, NH girls ranked 1st and NH boys ranked 2nd in lifetime marijuana use.

2). Have you developed a campaign platform to address illegal drug and underage drinking problems? If yes, please elaborate. If not, why not?

Individuals seeking treatment and recovery services for addiction frequently are denied coverage or must pay higher co-pays and deductibles, even if they have health insurance coverage from their employer.

3). Many in long-term recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, myself included, have experienced insurance discrimination, which means we have been denied life-saving treatments. Will you vote for a bill to end insurance discrimination by offering the same coverage – parity – for addiction services as for other health issues?

The cost of incarcerating a person in the New Hampshire State Prison in 2007 was \$31,000/year. There is no statewide drug and alcohol treatment facility designed specifically to serve the state's criminal offender population. In 2001, the Schneider Institute for Health Policy estimated the cost of residential treatment to be about \$12,500 per year and the cost for outpatient treatment to be about \$3,100 per year.

4). The war on drugs has proven that despite spending \$40 billion a year to fight it, drug use has not decreased. America's mayors, along with local law enforcement officials, are pushing for a new approach that puts an emphasis on treatment and alternatives to jail. Do you agree or disagree with this new direction and why?

5). Millions of Americans are in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, yet many still find it difficult to get an education, a good job, or health insurance due to discriminatory policies and laws. Do you support the repeal of these laws, which basically prevent people who have paid their debt to society from contributing to their families and communities in a positive way?