



Our input for the 2013 National Drug Control Strategy is a combined recommendation from the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) and the National Association for Children Of Alcoholics (NACoA).

According to ONDCP's website format for Strategy input, these comments likely apply to Chapters 1, 2, and 3 of the Strategy, and would apply to all instances involving parental abuse of drugs and alcohol (not to any specific substance). It would also be particularly relevant to the following special populations identified in the Strategy: Juveniles; Women and Families; Tribal Communities; and Military, Veterans, and Their Families.

Numerous research findings note that children and teens of substance abusing parents constitute one of the largest at-risk population of youth (approximately 19 million under the age of 18). The chronic emotional stress and trauma in these often very dysfunctional family environments can have a spectrum of significant emotional, behavioral and developmental implications for the impacted youth, and can affect their cognitive development, increase the likelihood of involvement with the juvenile justice system, diminish social skills, and myriad other implications, including increased and earlier substance use themselves.

The National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA) and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) acknowledge that many excellent recovery programs include children and other family members, but far too many do not. As a result, we strongly recommend that the 2013 NDCS not only acknowledge the negative impacts of parental substance use disorders on families, but also the need for early preventive interventions with this population so they can begin their own recovery and healing and help break the family cycle of addiction to alcohol and drugs. Since the vast majority of parents with diagnosable substance use problems do not receive treatment, relatively few children benefit from the family recovery programs that do exist. Additionally, children impacted by addicted parents who are not available to them do not receive effective recovery support for their own issues because the abusing parent is not in recovery, is incarcerated, deceased, or living elsewhere. Without intervention and support, these children continue to carry the trauma inside of them throughout their developmental years and into adulthood as well as the genetic predisposition to alcohol and drug addiction.

NACoA and NCADD believe noting the above in the appropriate sections of the NDCS (i.e., early prevention, intervention and/or recovery sections) can encourage others – child-care agencies, treatment programs, NGOs, professional associations, etc. - to advocate for strategies and the often-simple practices that can be carried out by those with whom they come in contact – teachers, clergy, school counselors, the non addicted parents, foster care personnel, grandparents, loved ones, and others whose presence and actions in the lives of these children can create positive influences and impact their life trajectory.

On behalf of the children and families who will benefit from these critically important changes, thank you for the opportunity to provide co

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