

For Immediate Release

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For more information, contact:
Angela de Rocha
Director of Communications
Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services
785-806-7482

State of Kansas Selected to Participate in SAMHSA Prescription Drug Abuse Academy

TOPEKA – The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has selected the State of Kansas to participate in SAMHSA’s 2014 Prescription Drug Abuse Policy Academy. The Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KADS) received notification that its application for the program was accepted on June 30.

“Data from the National Center for Substance Abuse and Child Welfare indicates that Kansas ranks among the top 10 states for prescription drug abuse among women. Kansas women of childbearing age are a top priority for help in addressing this situation,” KDADS Secretary Kari Bruffett said. “Participating in this program training will allow the state to identify and carry out needed systems changes so we can do a better job of addressing what we see as a dire trend.”

Prescription drug abuse in Kansas is a serious and growing public health concern and prevention issue with substantial, and often serious, health, safety, and wellness costs and consequences. Although the state was ranked as the 8th lowest in terms of drug overdose fatalities in the United States, with a rate of 9.6 per 100,000, that number of drug overdose fatalities in Kansas doubled from the rate of 3.4 per 100,000 reported in 1999. Among children and youth, prescription drug misuse and abuse is also of concern, with one in 10 students (10.65 percent) in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 reporting at least one occasion of lifetime use of prescription drugs not prescribed for them in 2013.

Additional data from Medicaid-funded treatment providers demonstrates the pervasiveness and tenacity of the issue: in 2013, 447 Kansas women and 426 males indicated other opiates or synthetics as the primary drug of choice at admission. This represents an increase of 135 women and 195 men over a five-year period beginning in 2008. Of the 447 women identifying other opiates or synthetics as the primary drug of choice in 2013, 28 were pregnant, meaning that slightly more than 5 percent were at high risk for issues including Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.

The SAMHSA program focuses on the reduction of prescription drug abuse, increased access to and utilization of intervention and treatment resources, increasing capacity the identifying barriers to treatment by developing a state strategic plan and on increasing the use of evidence-based strategies to address prescription drug abuse.

“We plan to place increased emphasis on initiatives and approaches that are inclusive for all populations, and are culturally relevant,” said KDADS Community Services and Programs Commissioner Gina Meier-Hummel. “Parental drug abuse is a significant factor in putting children at risk and in cases of children being taken into state custody because of abuse and neglect at home.”

The SAMHSA notification said, “Congratulations on submitting a very strong and comprehensive application. SAMHSA received a number of very competitive applications for the Policy Academy. Your state has clearly demonstrated its commitment to addressing our country’s prescription drug abuse crisis.”

Ten individuals from Kansas, including state staff from KDADS, the Kansas Department for Children and Families and the Kansas Department of Health and the Environment, as well as a Kansas methadone clinic, the Prairie Band tribe and an evaluation/data specialist from the state epidemiological profile workgroup will attend the Academy the week of August 11 in Bethesda, Maryland.

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The Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services mission is to foster an environment that promotes security, dignity and independence for all Kansans.