

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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For Immediate Release

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### **Survey of Illinois Voters Finds Broad Support for Addiction Treatment**

Lincolnwood, IL -- Eighty-five percent of Illinois voters believe that addiction is a public health problem better handled by prevention and treatment programs than by the criminal justice system, and three-fourths feel that treatment is a better option than fines or prison for dealing with drug users who commit non-violent crimes. These are the findings of a recent survey of 500 likely Illinois voters. The survey represents the first time that Illinois voters have been polled statewide regarding their views on alcohol and drug addiction, treatment, and recovery.

The survey further found that 95 percent of Illinois voters recognize drug and alcohol addiction as a pervasive illness that affects all levels of society, and three-fourths agree that over time, the chemistry of the brain of alcoholics and drug addicts changes so that they have very little control over their own actions. Fifty-three percent of respondents reported that they have an immediate family member or close friend who has or had a substance abuse problem or drug or alcohol addiction.

“Clearly, Illinois voters understand that addiction to alcohol and other drugs is a public health problem, and they believe that treatment should be available and accessible to those in need,” said Angela M. Bowman, CEO of the Illinois Alcoholism and Drug Dependence Association (IADDA), which commissioned the survey. “These findings help us advance the public policy discussion beyond the mere fact that addiction is pervasive and treatment is effective. People understand that. The discussion now must move toward making treatment and recovery resources more available to those in need, and reducing the stigma experienced by those in treatment and recovery.”

Asked who should be a priority to receive treatment, respondents cited the following groups as *very high priorities*: teenagers who have an alcohol or drug problem (cited by 65% of respondents); people who have both mental health problems and an addiction to drugs or alcohol (56%); people without health insurance who want treatment but cannot afford insurance on their own (52%); and parents who have lost custody or may lose custody of their children because of the parent’s addiction (50%).

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Bowman presented the survey findings at a regional conference of policy-makers and prevention and treatment specialists dedicated to improving the quality of and access to services across the Midwest. Hosted by IADDA and sponsored by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/Center for Substance Abuse Treatment and other partners, the conference is being held through Wednesday, September 25 at the Radisson Hotel Lincolnwood. It represents a regional observance of *National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month*, as well as the official Midwest rollout of *The National Treatment Plan Initiative to Improve Substance Abuse Treatment*, which was developed and is being implemented by public and private sector experts and practitioners across the country.

The survey was conducted by telephone from September 8-14, 2002 by Fako & Associates of Lemont, Illinois. No interviews were conducted on September 11. Respondents represented a broad cross-section of income levels, political views, education levels, and ages. Seventy-nine percent are white and 10% African-American. Fifty-two percent of respondents were female and 48% were male. Forty percent live in the Chicago suburbs; 20% in Chicago; 24% in northern Illinois, and 16% in southern Illinois. This is a representative sample of statewide voter turnout.

IADDA is a statewide organization established in 1967 representing more than 60 prevention and treatment agencies across Illinois, as well as individuals who are interested in prevention, treatment, and recovery. The association advocates for sound public policy to create healthier families and safer communities. For further information on IADDA or the conference, call (217) 528-7335.

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