



## **STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT: PROMOTING INJECTING DRUG USER HEALTH**

The National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors (NASTAD), on behalf of state and territorial health officials responsible for HIV/AIDS and viral hepatitis programs, continues to be concerned about the health risks and challenges faced by people who inject drugs (IDUs). While we have made significant strides in reducing new HIV infections among people who inject drugs, the public health response in meeting the prevention and care needs of IDUs remains inadequate.

Morbidity and mortality rates among IDUs remain disproportionately high. People who inject drugs bear the highest burden of hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection and are at increased risk for hepatitis A and B, despite the fact that vaccination against these infections is cost-effective and feasible within public health settings. Recently, alarming epidemiologic reports indicate a rise in HCV infections among young IDUs throughout the country. Effective prevention interventions do exist, although these interventions are not widely available and additional prevention strategies are needed.

In addition to becoming infected with HIV and viral hepatitis, people who inject drugs are fatally overdosing at elevated rates, despite available prevention tools. Access to substance use treatment is limited and overdose prevention efforts rarely have a “home” in state drug and alcohol, injury prevention or public health agencies. These concerning trends are clearly evident throughout our health care system, and yet the system often remains inaccessible and at times hostile to IDUs.

Recognizing the progress we have made in reducing new HIV infections among the IDU population, we acknowledge that our nation’s efforts are not sufficient to meet the comprehensive health needs of this population. To change the course it will require an honest and critical examination of our efforts among all stakeholders. NASTAD and its members commit to explicitly identify and implement effective public health programs for IDUs.

Expanded federal investment in disease and overdose prevention, care and treatment programs is paramount. NASTAD and its members will continue to advocate for increased and targeted resources.

*Approved by NASTAD’s Executive Committee on August 5, 2011*