



Arlene González-Sánchez, M.S., L.M.S.W.
Commissioner

Howard A. Zucker
Commissioner

MaryEllen Elia
Commissioner

Dear Colleague:

As you may recall, last year, we shared important information about the problem of heroin use and prescription opioid misuse. Heroin use is part of a larger substance abuse problem. Those who become addicted to heroin, often use alcohol, marijuana, cocaine and opioid painkillers, before using heroin. In fact, individuals and families who have shared their personal experiences with the disease of addiction note that alcohol and cannabinoids, including marijuana, are usually the first substances used, particularly by young adults under the age of 18. Addiction is a progressive disease and the use of these “gateway” substances is serious. Addressing this issue early may help to prevent p

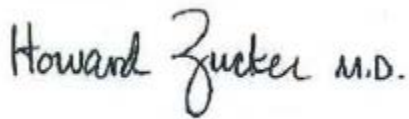


Please keep in mind that addiction can happen to anyone, to any family, and at any time. We believe by working together, everyone can help make a difference. We urge you to join us in the fight against addiction. Anyone in need of help for addiction should call the New York State HOPEline at

Sincerely,



Arlene González-Sánchez, M.S., L.M.S.W.
Commissioner
New York State Office of Alcoholism &
Substance Abuse Services



Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner
New York State Health Department



MaryEllen Elia
Commissioner of Education and President
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¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings* [PDF-3.2MB]. NSDUH Series H-48, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4863. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.