



Workforce Initiatives of the North Carolina Governor's Institute on Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Inc.

By Linda Kaplan

The Governor's Institute on Alcohol and Substance Abuse is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote the health and well-being of all North Carolina citizens. Initiated in 1989 with funding from State and Federal grants, the idea for the Institute arose from the concern of two pediatricians, Dr. Mike Durfee and Dr. Jonnie McLeod, who found a common thread between women with low birth weight babies, teens with emotional disturbances, battered spouses, other victims of violent behavior, and children and youth involved in accidents. The common thread was substance use disorders, which had often aggravated or even caused these problems.

The Governor's Institute was incorporated in 1991 by a steering committee with representatives from the State's four major medical schools (Wake Forest School of Medicine, Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, Duke School of Medicine, and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill School of Medicine), the State Substance Abuse Services Section of the Department of Health and Human Services, the Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) and the Governor's Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse. In partnership with a variety of organizations in the State, the Institute fosters improved education, research, and communication

among health care professionals and their communities to address the impact of, response to, and prevention of alcohol and other drug disorders.

Among the Institute's projects are several workforce-related initiatives:

- **Advancing Best Practices:** A major focus of the Governor's Institute is to bridge the gap between research and practice. Building on the work of the Institute's Practice Improvement Collaborative grant from SAMHSA, the Governor's Institute annually assesses and evaluates the needs of substance abuse and mental health providers and practitioners for evidenced-based practices. The Institute convenes a monthly meeting of educators, researchers, and providers for presentations on evidenced-based treatment models by leaders in the field.
- **Higher Ed Consortium:** The Higher Ed Consortium aims to infuse substance abuse content into the curricula for other health and human service disciplines throughout North Carolina. Past successes have included curricula for medical and dental schools; substance abuse treatment residencies for medical students; fostering research in graduate programs; and introduction of substance abuse curricula in human service college programs. A curriculum for nurses, which was developed through a collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC), was implemented at schools across the State in 1998. In August 2006, the Governor's Institute hosted an educational summit to determine effective education strategies for faculty and students.

- Physician Leadership Council:**
Working with physicians from around the State, the Governor’s Institute is defining the role of primary care specialists in the treatment, prevention and recovery of substance use disorders. The Institute is providing education about screening and brief interventions and encouraging the referral of those who need the services of the public addiction treatment system.
- Student Mentor and Leadership Program:** This relatively new program is designed to increase diversity in the substance abuse field and build a new cadre of leaders. The purpose of this program is to educate minority students, who are either in their junior or senior year of college or who are in their first year of graduate school in human services, about substance abuse and mental health treatment and prevention, and encourage them to choose careers in the fields. The first year of the program, which has both mentoring and leadership components, included nine students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities, who started in February 2005 and graduated in March 2006. The program focuses on increasing students’ knowledge of substance abuse issues, as well as enhancing their leadership skills. Each student is paired with a mentor from the leadership program and provided an

opportunity to practice his or her leadership skills. The students also have to complete an individual community project as part of the program. Those who graduate from the program receive 64 credits toward their State alcohol and drug certification. Students also receive a \$1500 stipend when they enter the leadership phase.

The Student Mentor and Leadership Program is built on the idea of believing in and being open to new possibilities. As Larry Woodard, the Project Director said, “If you have vision, you always have hope and there is nothing greater than looking forward to tomorrow with hope and a vision.”

The Governor’s Institute initiatives are proving to be valuable to the State and the field. By creating partnerships with clinicians, client advocates, policymakers, and researchers, the Institute is helping to improve the quality and effectiveness of the substance abuse delivery system in North Carolina.

For more information about the Student Mentor and Leadership Program, contact Larry Woodard, Director of Workforce Education at lwoodard1@mindspring.com or 919-256-7412. Information about the Governor’s Institute can be found at www.governorsinstitute.org.

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