



Ohio Alcohol and Other Drug Addiction Workforce Development Project

By Linda Kaplan

Workforce development in the addiction prevention and treatment field has been the focus of a number of national efforts, but it is at the State level that many innovative approaches to complex workforce challenges are being developed and implemented. Ohio is a prime example of a State that is addressing workforce development for prevention and treatment professionals in a comprehensive manner. The Ohio Alcohol and Other Drug Addiction Workforce Development Project (Ohio Workforce Project) was created in 2004 to address the issues of recruitment, retention, training, and career development for Ohio professionals working in substance abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment.

The Ohio Workforce Project is a collaboration between the Association for Addiction Professionals (NAADAC), the Ohio Association of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselors (OAADAC), the Ohio Council of Behavioral Healthcare Providers, and the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services (ODADAS). The partnership also includes the University of Cincinnati/Ohio Resource Network, the Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board, the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Association of Ohio and the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Healthcare Authorities. A \$100,000 Federal earmark, spearheaded by NAADAC, provided base funding for the Ohio Workforce Project's initial year of operation,

and a second year of funding at the \$100,000 level was obtained to continue the Center. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) administers the Federal funding for the Ohio Workforce Project.

A study conducted by Drug Strategies (and available online at www.drugstrategies.org/acrobat/Ohio95.pdf) showed that as many as one million people in Ohio need addiction treatment, but the public sector is only able to serve about 90,000 of its citizens. Given this shortage in treatment capacity, retaining and expanding the workforce became a major priority. The Ohio Workforce Project seeks to increase awareness about careers in the treatment field, instill successful business management practices in community-based prevention and treatment agencies, and develop undergraduate and graduate educational opportunities that meet established educational standards.

The Ohio Workforce Project had achieved many significant milestones. For example, they have:

- Conducted four focus groups to gauge the workforce issues from the perspective of various stakeholders—e.g., counselors, prevention professionals, providers, and supervisors.
- Conducted a survey of 55 administrators, supervisors, counselors and prevention specialists within publicly-funded programs at the 2003 Fall Directors Conference to identify critical issues related to recruitment, retention and education of the workforce;
- Held a Workforce Summit at the OAADAC conference in October 2004 that was attended by treatment program directors, practitioners and representatives of the recovery community;

- Prepared a report in April 2005, titled the Ohio Workforce Survey Analysis, which summarized findings from the focus groups and survey;
- Co-produced a workforce development recruitment video;
- Compiled a booklet with best practices related to recruitment and retention, entitled, “Tricks of the Trade, Workforce Development Recruitment and Retention. What’s Working in Ohio’s Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Services Organizations,” which includes best practices nominated by participants at the April 2005 Directors Conference; and
- Organized a series of meetings with community college human service professionals to encourage them to discuss careers in the addiction treatment and prevention fields with their students.

Goals for the second year of the Ohio Workforce Project were equally as ambitious. A priority for 2005 was a survey of prevention professionals—i.e., administrators of prevention agencies, treatment agencies with prevention programs, community coalitions, and certified preventionists. The survey was funded by the Central Center for Application of Prevention Technologies (CAPT) as part of ODADAS’s annual request for support from the CAPT. The results of the survey were presented at a Fall 2005 Think Tank and formed the basis of a strategic plan for the prevention field.

Another priority for the second year was to develop a website that provides comprehensive information on the training and education available for addiction treatment professionals in Ohio. The intent

of the website is to make higher education more accessible to addiction professionals throughout the State, as well as to others interested in the addiction treatment field. The website, eBasedTreatment.org, is modeled after the ebasedprevention.org website, which provides information about resources, training, and research related to alcohol and other drug abuse prevention and school safety.

A third priority for the second year was recruitment. The Ohio Workforce Project is developing and disseminating a recruitment brochure to enhance interest in the addiction field. The Ohio Workforce Project also plans to work with colleges and universities to increase interest in careers in addiction treatment and prevention.

The commitment and support of Ohio’s State Agency has been invaluable to the Ohio Workforce Project’s development. Also essential to the State’s obtaining funding for this project has been the support from Ohio’s U.S. Senators and several key Congressmen, as well as the support of the Governor’s wife, who is an active advocate for addiction treatment and prevention. Another critical element in the project’s success is the involvement of many key stakeholders—addiction treatment and prevention professionals, providers, educators, policymakers, certification boards and professional associations. Workforce issues are best addressed when the entire system comes together to forge strategic solutions.

For more information about the Ohio Workforce Project, contact John Lisy, Executive Director of the Shaker Heights Youth Center, at 216-752-9292 or by e-mailing jlsiy@msn.com.

Linda Kaplan, M.A., is the President/CEO of Global KL, LLC, a small women-owned consulting company that focuses on workforce development, training, technical assistance, evaluation, and policy issues. She is an Expert to SAMHSA/CSAT on the Recovery Community Services Programs (RCSPs) and on workforce issues.