



Association of Utah Substance Abuse Professionals

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2015 President's Report: Utah (Association of Utah Substance Abuse Professionals-AUSAP)

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We completed the Bylaws revisions allowing for two major changes. These changes were to allow for the creation of a 5th Executive Board position, Past President and the second revision was to allow for E-Ballots in Utah Chapter elections. Our first Electronic election was held in June and for the first time, all members, State wide were eligible to participate without attending a Membership Meeting.

Our Website now provides full transparency of Board Meeting Minutes, Bylaws, Financial Reports and our Budget. We include local employment ads, CEU opportunities, and community events.

It is expected that Utah has been approved and to receive assistance for the Education of 500 Peer Specialists. Currently Utah legislation does not allow for any Government level supervision, nor sanction oversight of these potential employees. We are working with representatives at the State government level to utilize our Credentialing Committee for oversight, ongoing education and ethical regulation.

Utah passed Sober Living licensure standards to assure professionalism, public safety, and protection. There are now requirements to obtain licensure if a facility is operated as an advertised substance abuse recovery environment and State standards for facility compliance.

Utah passed the Good Samaritan Act supporting dispensing of Naloxone and legal protection of anyone in possession of substances who calls emergency rescue for overdosing people. Substances will be confiscated but prosecution of those with the victim is waived.

(Utah has been from 5th to 8th in the Nation in Opiate related overdose deaths since 2008-2010)

Utah Professional Licensing increased the number of web based hours allowed CEU's from 5 to 10. This has been helpful for us to promote membership by propelling the variety of NAADAC CEU's.

Utah Legislature has approved the Prison Relocation plan. A part of this relocation plan is to transform the Correctional System from a punitive, incarceration type system to one that effectively diverts substance use and mental health populations to treatment alternatives. This will include the reduction of simple possession felonies, to misdemeanors, with mandated participation in SUD treatment. Jails will be utilized as sanctions and prison stays will be reserved for non-compliant. Some \$13million has been appropriated for research, treatment and new services. The Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) become effective Oct 1, 2015

The JRI committee is now holding hearings to develop best practice expectations and standardized expectation of treatment providers serving judicially involved clients.

We have seen great participation in Recovery Days events in Utah and provided sponsorship of events throughout the State. Utah had well over 5000 people attend various events.

We have supported the Department of Human Services and the Utah Insurance Commission in requiring legislation that prohibits the practice of insurance providers denying authorization for Court Ordered treatment services and moving toward medical need based standards.

We have members and Board members actively involved in the Utah Governors Substance Abuse Treatment Advisory Committee where we hold 2 seats. The table includes the Utah NASW, professional counselors association, Utah Psychologists Assoc. , Utah Medical Associations as well as police, legislative and citizen representatives.

At the Utah Dept. of Professional Licensing, we have 3 members who hold seats.

We are involved in the JRI Committee meetings now and have three members of AUSAP participating.

And, Medicaid expansion remains a goal. Utah Medical Association, Utah Hospital Assoc., few other groups have not support Utah version which taxes medical providers near 7% of each Medicaid dollar to fund the Utah share of expansion. AUSAP supports the plan, even though the tax is levied at health providers.

Utah has seen a rash of suspected fraudulent practices involving insurance benefits. This includes some agencies billing on behalf of “phantom patients”, paying bonus or rewards for securing patients, enrolling patients in programs and then securing insurance coverage, and urine testing rate gouging. This has recently been estimated at near \$23million in suspect overbilling. There have been a few settlements negotiated with providers and insurance companies, one reported near \$3million. The State Legislature is forming a committee to look into legislation to curtail these practices. Regence has threatened the provider status of some agencies they are in negotiations with. Some of these Agencies fall into the Sober Living category, and is some of the impetus for Sober Living oversight, (coupled with overdose deaths.) Many insurance companies are complaining....so the height of this issue may not have yet come to light.

Our Email system for membership information has been successful. We have sent surveys, educational information, current legislative information and public events announcements frequently.

As far as our Membership and participation locally, our Scholarship Program has been received well. We have provided Scholarships to about 50 members (over two years) to attend CEU qualified trainings and conferences. This Program was created in Utah after much of the public and political criticism AUSAP had been the recipient of...as having had offered little to its local membership. You may recall one of the key commitments I made to our members is I would suspend any out of State travel as well as the “networking lunch and travel budget”. At the time, this represented the largest area of expenditures for AUSAP other than actual test costs. Our membership now has immediate info via email and our website of local value. And the Scholarship program has provided assistance to many members either between employers or with an employer who does not offer CEU assistance. I believe we have turned the corner in terms of the Agencies local political and membership perceptions. Our email and website information sharing system has been very useful in assisting to rebuild our position.

That represents a very busy and successful year in Utah! It has been my pleasure to see AUSAP succeed and I look forward to having a “continued business” plan in place upon my term completion, as well as I shall continue on the Board.