

STATE OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF ALCOHOLISM  
AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**OASAS ANNOUNCES NEW YORK THE FIRST IN THE NATION TO GO  
TOBACCO-FREE IN ALL PREVENTION AND TREATMENT PROGRAMS  
Agency Launches Landmark Initiative to Treat Tobacco Addiction**

State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) Commissioner Karen M. Carpenter-Palumbo today announced that New York will be the first state in the nation to require tobacco-free environments at all prevention and treatment programs which are funded or certified by OASAS.

The initiative, announced on the anniversary of the Clean Indoor Air Act, is targeting tobacco-related disease, which kills more people each year than all other addictive substances combined.

“For years in the treatment of addiction it was thought that treating the tobacco dependence would put unfair pressure on the patient working toward recovery,” said Commissioner Carpenter-Palumbo. “We now know that’s not true. Including tobacco dependence while treating other addictions actually leads to higher recovery success rates. We need to focus on the overall wellness of our patients and not ignore this deadly addiction.”

OASAS, which certifies and funds more than 1,400 prevention and treatment programs, today issued a proposed regulation that would take effect July 24, 2008, following final approval. It would require that all providers prohibit tobacco within facilities, on all grounds under their control and in program vehicles.

“This is a tremendous step in our efforts to put patients first in the OASAS system of care,” Commissioner Carpenter-Palumbo said.

An \$8 million grant from the Department of Health (DOH) will provide smoking cessation training and nicotine replacement patches, lozenges and gum at no cost to individuals who do not have insurance coverage for those materials.

“On any given day, 110,000 people are being treated in New York state – we oversee the largest chemical dependence system in the nation,” Commissioner Carpenter-Palumbo continued. “This collaboration with the Department of Health will allow us to

reach thousands of New Yorkers who deserve lives free of addiction, including tobacco addiction.”

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"The concept of wellness includes a person's total health -- and tobacco addiction is dangerous to the smoker, as well as to the people nearby who breathe in secondhand smoke," said state Health Commissioner Richard F. Daines, M.D. "The state Health Department is proud to assist OASAS in its efforts to help New Yorkers live free of addiction."

Studies have shown that as many as 92 percent of those struggling with chemical or alcohol addiction also smoke, compared with 19 percent of the general population in New York state. There is also evidence to show that tobacco negatively impacts recovery rates from other substances and more than 50 percent of the deaths in the substance abuse treatment populations are due to tobacco-related disease.

The tobacco-free initiative led by OASAS will include an education and support campaign titled, *Tobacco Independence: Freedom from a Deadly Addiction* to help providers with all aspects of going tobacco-free.

The *Tobacco Independence* education campaign includes Web-based information on all aspects of the initiative. Providers will receive a technical assistance kit to plan implementation of the policy at their facilities. E-mail and telephone services at OASAS have been established to handle tobacco-free questions and concerns. In addition, monthly information forums for providers will be held, starting in September in conjunction with Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Providers of New York State (ASAP). The ASAP Tobacco Dependence Resource Center ([www.tobaccodependence.org](http://www.tobaccodependence.org)) will also be an invaluable resource for programs as they begin to integrate treatment for tobacco dependence into their programs.

“We’re committed to providing the resources that providers need to begin the process of change in our system” said John Coppola, ASAP Executive Director. “Working together with OASAS on the implementation of this effort to reduce tobacco dependence and improve the health of our patients, ASAP will provide necessary support to the field and help to ensure the success of this major health initiative.”

“New York is setting the standard for other states on smoking prevention,” said Donald Distasio, Chief Executive Officer of the American Cancer Society's Eastern Division. “There is no dispute that the consequences of a tobacco addiction are both devastating and deadly. The American Cancer Society applauds Commissioners Carpenter-Palumbo and Daines for their vision and leadership, and we pledge our support to aid these efforts any way we can.”

For more information about the proposed regulation, resources for providers, patients and employees, visit [www.oasas.state.ny.us/tobacco/index.cfm](http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/tobacco/index.cfm)