

Physicians and Lawyers for National Drug Policy:

A PUBLIC HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

- *Mission: To align policy, practice, and public understanding with the scientific evidence that addiction is a preventable and treatable disease; to support the use of evidence-based, cost-effective approaches toward prevention and treatment; and to enable lawyers and physicians to provide effective and sustained leadership in this effort.*

- *Organizational Objectives: Physicians and Lawyers for National Drug Policy will take the lessons and strategies learned from the original *Physician Leadership on National Drug Policy* to build a stable and sustainable bridge between law and medicine. The new PLNDP intends to:*
 - ❖ Provide a non-partisan **platform** for expressing and disseminating informed, evidence-based professional opinion on policies and practices relating to substance abuse.
 - ❖ Present a balanced, scientifically grounded perspective, and thereby provide a **voice** now missing from the highly polarized debate on drug policy.
 - ❖ Harness the energies and resources of **lawyers and physicians** to promote public education and improved policy and practice.

- *Organizational Overview: The PLNDP leadership is officially comprised of nationally recognized lawyers and physicians, but PLNDP will informally involve additional individuals and organizations that share its objectives. During the next two years, PLNDP will:*
 - ❖ Draft a stable, long-term, realistic, public health oriented organizational strategy that is progressive and non-partisan, and can reduce tendencies toward politically driven responses to drug problems.
 - ❖ Establish permanent, public health partnerships of lawyers and physicians in every state.
 - ❖ Develop and disseminate user-friendly, scientific evidence for the judiciary, legislature, medical community, and public-at-large.

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- *Organizational Perspective:* PLNDP has united leaders from law and medicine to move policy and practice in a direction that reflects the following perspectives:
 - ❖ The United States should embrace a stable, evidence-based, long-term strategy for controlling what is, and will continue to be, an endemic social problem, taking account of the costs and benefits of every policy instrument deployed.
 - ❖ Drug policy should reflect a public health approach to the prevention and treatment of substance abuse and should avoid excessive reliance on criminal enforcement and disproportionate punishment.
 - ❖ The benefits of treatment to individuals, their families and communities are well documented and promising new research is likely to produce even more effective approaches.
 - ❖ Physicians and other health care providers should be able to treat addicted individuals without undue impediments; insurance and health plans should cover the costs of treatment; and the legal system should help to identify people in need of treatment and should facilitate effective interventions.
 - ❖ Understanding that addiction is a disease does not absolve addicted persons of responsibility for their behavior, but their addiction should be given strong weight in mitigation of punishment, and as a basis for diversion from the criminal justice system.
 - ❖ Sending addicted people to prison does not, by itself, help them recover and the collateral consequences associated with a criminal record create enormous barriers to effective recovery.
 - ❖ Reliance on local initiatives should be a key element of national drug policy.

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