NEW YORK state department of HEALTH
Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.
Acting Commissioner

OASAS Improving Lives.
NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF ALCOHOLISM & SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES
Addiction Services for Prevention, Treatment, Recovery
Arlene González-Sánchez
Commissioner

John B. King, Jr.
Commissioner

Dear Colleague,

As you know, the problem of heroin and opioid abuse continues to grow at alarming rates both in New York State and throughout the nation. The percentage of New York State high school students who reported using heroin has more than doubled in recent years (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2005 and 2011[1]). In 2013, there were 89,269 admissions into treatment facilities for heroin and prescription opioid abuse in New York State alone, an increase from 63,793 in 2004. During this same time period, New Yorkers ages 18 to 24 had the largest increase in such admissions[2].

This past June, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed legislation to develop and conduct a public health awareness campaign to address the dangers of opioid addiction and heroin use. State agencies worked collaboratively to develop a new campaign to raise awareness about the risks, inform individuals about the warning signs and educate the public about resources available to help. The campaign includes public service announcements, a new website, digital (online) ads, social media and print materials, featuring real individuals who have experienced the tragic consequences of opioid and heroin use.

We ask you to help raise awareness by sharing and promoting this information with teachers, school staff, students, healthcare professionals, patients, friends and family members, and throughout your community. Visit www.combatheroin.ny.gov to learn more about opioid and heroin abuse. Please also include this link as a resource on your website. New publications and additional resources are available free of charge and can be ordered on the site.

Keep in mind, addiction can happen to anyone, to any family, and at any time. We believe by working together everyone can help make a difference, and we urge you to join us in the fight against this growing epidemic.

Sincerely,

Arlene González-Sánchez, M.S., L.M.S.W.
Commissioner
New York State Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services

John B. King, Jr
Commissioner of Education
New York State Education Department

Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.
Acting Commissioner
New York State Health Department

[1]Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *1991-2013 High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data.* Available at http://nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/. Accessed on April 8, 2014.

[2]New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) Data Warehouse, April 13, 2014.