

BERGEN COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

2017-2018

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September 2017

Dear Bergen County Families and Students,

The Bergen County Association of School Administrators, representing the district-level leadership of Bergen County's 76 school districts and 133,000 students, has been watching with growing concern the increase in addiction-related issues in our communities. The level and type of addiction, whether it be to alcohol, opiates, or prescription medication, has been increasing and from many reports continues to escalate. It is clear that this crisis is not specific to any one community, socioeconomic group, or ethnicity, but is rather a problem affecting all of Bergen County, and therefore all of our students and their families.

In light of this issue, and reinforcing our responsibilities as leaders and stewards of our communities and their children, we want to continue to recognize our collective commitment to helping our students and their families navigate this crisis. To that end, we want to reaffirm the following:

- **Outreach and Help**

- Students grappling with addiction should continue to feel comfortable reaching out for help to their school and district-based support systems. This includes Student Assistance Counselors, Schools Counselors, Teachers and School Administrators. A student who comes to any one of these staff members for help will receive confidential and discreet assistance.

- **Family Support**

- Addiction is a family disease and the behavior and chaos caused by an addicted member spasms through the entire home. Our schools have built-in support structures for parents, siblings and other family members grappling with the addiction of a family member. Family members are encouraged to contact school-based resources for assistance. If the need goes beyond what the school can offer, our staff will connect family members with local service providers who work specifically with families.

- **Advocacy**

- Alongside our school and district-based services, the BCASA is strident in continuing its advocacy on behalf of our students and their families. Recognizing that addiction is a mental-health issue, treatment should be compassionate, respectful of the needs of the victim and those who are affected by the addiction. The BCASA will continue to partner with local, state, and national organizations that support those in need.

The BCASA, recognizing that collaboration between different groups is important, is happy to pass along the work being done by the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office (BCPO). The BCPO, as part of its ongoing efforts to address this issue has created a series of resources for students and family members. Their website may be visited here: <https://www.bcpo.net/>. Another local resource that may prove helpful is <http://www.bergenresourcenet.org/>.

As always, the BCASA and its members are prepared to assist our students and their families as needed regarding any issue. Special attention is being given to the ongoing addiction issues facing our families, and we would like to reinforce that Bergen County's school districts are prepared to play a vital and important role in helping to alleviate the burden this crisis is placing on our students and their families.

Sincerely yours,

The Bergen County Association of School Administrators