

# Improving State Drug Laws



## Information Brief

May, 2005

### National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws—Performance Results

#### Overview

States seeking effective legislative solutions to laws and regulations relating to substance abuse problems often turn to the National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws (NAMSDL). Congressionally funded since fiscal year 1995, NAMSDL uses a performance-based approach to assist states in developing comprehensive state drug and alcohol laws, policies, and programs. NAMSDL's purpose is to extend the reach of federal drug control efforts, thereby ensuring a national response to the drug problem. Congress understands that a successful national effort requires a balanced, comprehensive drug control strategy that addresses not only federal drug control efforts, but also those at the state and local levels.

#### Background

NAMSDL is the successor of the President's Commission on Model State Drug Laws. The Commission was created by Congress as part of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988, which established the federal Office of National Drug Control Policy and other elements of a national drug control infrastructure to combat drug abuse and its damaging consequences. The President's Commission was tasked with creating a model code of laws to help states effectively address alcohol and other drug abuse. In 1993, the President's Commission released its final report to the National Governors Association, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the federal drug control community. Congress created NAMSDL to help states implement the recommendations of the 1993 Commission report.

By our calculation, states have passed over 100 model laws, policies, or pro-

grams because of NAMSDL's efforts, covering areas such as economic crimes, wiretap law improvements, precursor chemical control to combat methamphetamine use and production, worker's compensation related to treatment, prescription drug monitoring, drug free zones, penalty provisions for dealing drugs, underage drinking, substance abuse parity, recovery networks, drug-free workplace policies, gangs and drug dealing, and tax credits for businesses offering treatment.

#### A Logic-Oriented Approach

From the outset, NAMSDL adopted a performance-based approach to manage for results. Logic models—tools of the trade in performance-based organizations—assist states in understanding how best to adopt and implement effective and comprehensive state laws, policies, and programs. NAMSDL's performance outcome is straightforward—the adoption, change, or consideration of laws, policies and practices that are based on or related to the model state drug laws. It achieves results through the use of performance-oriented state Summits designed to assess current drug and alcohol efforts and to craft recommendations and action plans for strengthening laws, policies, and programs, using the model laws as a menu of options.

The Summits are two-day conferences designed to educate and inform state officials of the importance of model laws. Holding the Summit is just one aspect of NAMSDL's overall approach. The preparation process for the Summit is much more extensive—averaging about 18 months of intensive work—and begins when a state requests NAMSDL's help in designing and implementing laws, policies, or programs.

#### Quick Facts

- NAMSDL has held 22 state model law drug Summits with two more scheduled for 2005.
- Over 100 laws, policies, and/or practices have been adopted, changed and/or considered by states as a result of the Summit process and related work with NAMSDL.
- At any given time, NAMSDL is working with as many as 30 states on specific issues.
- After the Idaho Summit, 92 percent of attendees surveyed said that they have a high interest level in having NAMSDL assist them with implementation of recommendations.
- Ninety-two percent of participants surveyed for NAMSDL's National Methamphetamine Conference agreed that the event raised awareness levels regarding methamphetamine lab issues and the laws, policies and programs designed to address them.
- The Federal Bureau of Justice Assistance relies on NAMSDL to provide technical assistance for the Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

# NAMSDL's Summit Process

## Step 1: Needs Assessment—

NAMSDL's first step is to conduct a needs assessment to determine the nature and extent of the substance abuse problem in the state and to identify state-specific issues. This assessment also involves identifying and working with key leaders and stakeholders responsible for program and policy changes to apprise them of NAMSDL's process. This step may last up to nine months.

## Step 2: The Summit—

This is an intense, two-day conference that includes facilitated working groups in which participants engage in a discussion of current alcohol and drug-related efforts, craft recommendations, and develop action plans for implementation. The Summit raises awareness of state-specific issues and mobilizes participants to change state laws, programs, and practices. Performance is measured by tracking the change in participant awareness of state-specific drug issues. NAMSDL also prepares a Summit summary report within 90 days after the event that contains the Summit's recommendations.

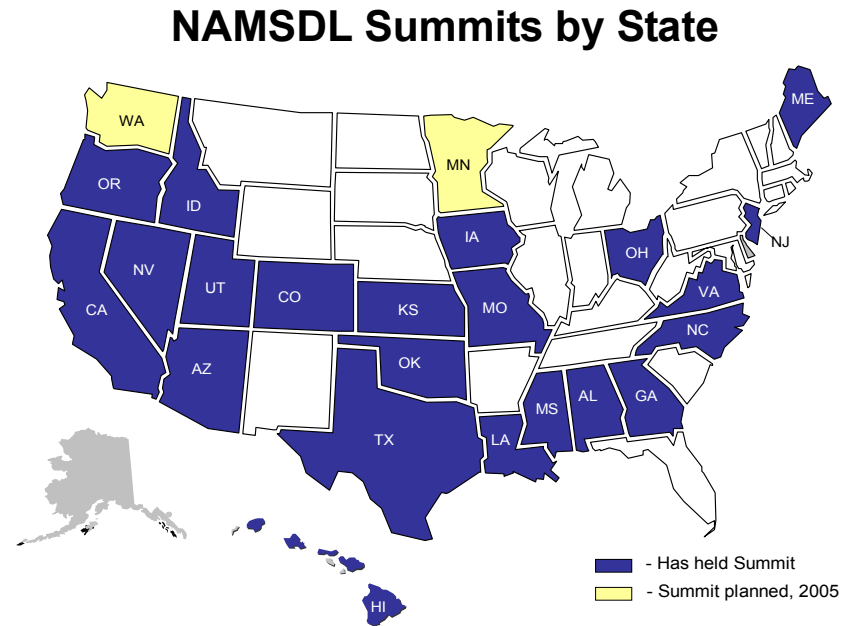
## Step 3: Promoting awareness—

The third step extends raising awareness and understanding of substance abuse issues statewide and increases coordination among stakeholders. Performance measures tend to be process-oriented and track the work of designated committees and the formulation of action plans to implement Summit recommendations, which may include adoption of legislation based on model laws or related concepts.

## Step 4: Action plan implementation—

This step involves implementing Summit recommendations and action plans. Step 4 performance measures track the drafting of legislation and meetings, briefings, and hearings before the legislative and executive branches.

NAMSDL provides guidance and technical assistance throughout the Summit process. It achieves success—its per-



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formance outcome—when a state introduces or passes laws, or changes policies or practices. The adoption, change, and/or consideration of legislation based on or related to the model laws and more effective substance abuse policies and practices (e.g. coordination of efforts, use of existing resources) are the ultimate outcomes. It is only then that NAMSDL can claim it has helped a state to improve their drug control efforts.

To improve its Summit process, NAMSDL polls its participants up to a year after a Summit is held to learn more about their needs and what NAMSDL could have done differently to improve its usefulness to states. This information is used to improve the effectiveness of subsequent Summit processes and related technical assistance efforts.

### Performance Success

To date, 46 states have reached out to NAMSDL for assistance and 22 states—

almost half—have engaged in NAMSDL's Summit process. This year, two more states—Washington and Minnesota—will hold Summits. It is important to note that at any given time, the Alliance is working with as many as 30 states on specific issues related to model drug laws, policies, and practices. Additionally, NAMSDL proactively distributes legislative updates on key issues to decision makers in all states on a regular basis to support states' work in addressing alcohol and other drug problems. Over 100 laws, policies, and practices have been adopted, changed, and/or considered by states as a result of the Summit process and related work with NAMSDL, thereby enabling states to improve their own drug-related efforts and to support the broader national effort to reduce drug use and its damaging consequences.

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