

**NEW JERSEY GUBERNATORIAL AND ASSEMBLYPERSON CANDIDATE SURVEY
FOR PREVENTION, TREATMENT, and RECOVERY
FOR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS
NOVEMBER 2025**

Substance use disorders are chronic health conditions, yet the stigma associated with them continues to persist and often prevents people from seeking and receiving services, contributing to the severity of the disorder and adding huge costs to public programs. The National Center for Advocacy and Recovery, Inc. (NCAAR) provides candidates the opportunity to share their perspective with statewide constituents on prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts to build a healthier and more equitable New Jersey.

General Views on Substance Use Disorders (SUD)

For each question, please check all responses that best reflect your position.

1. What is your general view of substance use disorders? (Select all that apply)

- ☒ Substance use disorders are preventable and treatable health conditions that require a public health approach with health-based interventions.
- ☐ Substance use disorders are matters of personal responsibility. Government assistance is warranted, but ultimately, recovery is dependent on the individual's choices.
- ☐ Substance use disorders are a criminal justice issue that require legal and punitive responses.
- ☐ Other

2. Please rank the follow groups in order of how important you believe their influence should be on substance use disorder (SUD) policy and spending decisions in New Jersey, with **1 being the most important and 8 being the least important**:

1	Experts in public health and addiction
2	Community-Based Organizations
3	Individuals, families, and communities with lived experience of SUD
4	Treatment Providers
5	NJ State Government and Agencies
6	Institutions of higher education and research scientists
7	Law enforcement Leadership
8	Other

3. If you chose "other" in question 2, please specify here

Strategies to Address Substance Use Disorder in New Jersey

4. If elected, I would support the following approaches to address substance use disorder: (Select all that apply)

- ☒ Increase investment in the treatment and recovery infrastructure to address substance use disorders
- ☒ Expand strategies to reduce health risks related to substance use (i.e. naloxone distribution, syringe access, etc.)
- ☒ Housing First programs for those with substance use disorder
- ☒ Expansion of peer recovery support services
- ☒ Community-based recovery alternatives to incarceration
- ☒ Continued reform for criminal record expungement
- ☒ Implementation of evidence-based standards of care for substance use disorder
- ☐ Increase funding for law enforcement responses and criminal penalties for drug-related offenses
- ☒ Increase collaboration between law enforcement, healthcare, and community organizations
- ☒ Strengthen prevention, education, and support services for families and communities affected by substance use
- ☐ Other

5. What is your position on the use of general health strategies that reduce harm and health risks associated with substance use (i.e. medication, naloxone distribution, syringe exchange, etc.)? (Select all that apply)

- ☒ Strongly support
- ☐ Somewhat support, but with restrictions
- ☐ Oppose, prefer abstinence-based or punitive responses
- ☐ Need more information before deciding

☐ Other

6. I would support sufficient government funding for the following initiatives to reduce harm and improve access to care for individuals with substance use disorder: (Select all that apply)

☒ Harm Reduction Centers and mobile outreach vans for distribution of safer use supplies and information on resources in the community

☒ Drop-In Centers with showers, meals, and social services

☒ A capacity expansion initiative for a "treatment on demand" model, particularly in high-need areas

☒ Overdose Prevention Centers

☒ Expansion of peer and community-led prevention, outreach, and overdose response teams

☒ Continued support for no-cost naloxone distribution programs

☐ I would like more information about these initiatives

☐ Other

7. What are your top priorities for opioid settlement funding? (Select all that apply)

☒ Expand access to medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD)

☒ Increase naloxone distribution and overdose prevention resources, especially in high need areas.

☒ Build and support recovery housing and supportive employment

☒ Expand school and community-based prevention initiatives

☒ Enhance law enforcement capacity to combat the illegal drug supply

☒ Support research and innovation in substance use disorder approaches

☐ Other

Legislative Priorities

8. In seventy-five (75) words or less, please explain any other legislative priorities you will have regarding the prevention, treatment of and recovery from addictive illnesses if elected.

We must stop treating addiction as a choice and start to treat it as the disease it is. We must improve education to the public and work to remove the stigma attached to those suffering from addiction and augment state and local funding to restore those afflicted to good health. As a Board Member of Bergen New Bridge Medical Center, one of the largest treatment centers, I see first hand what good can be done with sound recovery programs.

9. I permit NCAAR to provide direct quotes from the statements below to inform the public of my position on substance use disorders and the overdose crisis in New Jersey. *

☒ Yes

☐ No

10. Candidate Name *

Donna C. Abene

11. Candidate Signature *

Donna C. Abene

12. Legislative District *

39

13. Legislative Party *

Democratic

14. Date *

9/25/2025

