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Office of the Governor
Utulei, American Samoa
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“American Samoa, the only US Territory selected to participate in the NGA Policy Academy on Stimulant Polysubstance Use.”

“...I believe it is a great opportunity to get our foot in the door to learn more on how to adopt the best processes that are used throughout the country and adapt them to the unique circumstances that exist in our Territory.”

The National Governors Association (NGA) announced that American Samoa is among four states and territories selected to participate in the NGA Policy Academy on State Strategies to Improve Care for Stimulant and Polysubstance use. This year-long academy is sponsored by the NGA Best Practices (NGA Center). It will provide ample opportunities to begin assessments of existing plans and institutional structures and develop a comprehensive strategy to provide treatment and support for drug abuse and addiction.

The use of illicit drugs, especially methamphetamine use, continues to have a detrimental impact on our Territory. “In the Executive Summary submitted with American Samoa’s application to the policy academy, it discussed that the first reported cases of methamphetamine abuse or substance use disorder in the Territory happened in the late 1990s. Since, American Samoa continues to suffer from the worsening drug epidemic, despite adopting some of the harshest drug penalties compared to any other state or Territory in the United States. Although this academy’s focus is on polysubstances, I believe it is a great opportunity to get our foot in the door to learn more on how to adopt the best processes that are used throughout the country and adapt them to the unique circumstances that exist in our island.” Governor Lemanu stated.

He continued, “We pledge to put forth the resources and support needed to fight substance abuse and provide treatment programs for victims of substance use disorder. I speak for both myself and Lieutenant Governor Talauega when I say that American Samoa cannot continue losing loved ones to this problem. Our prayers are for those families who know the suffering of dealing with a victim of substance abuse, the out-of-pocket costs of putting them through treatment programs off-island, and the pain of ultimately losing a loved one.”

Governor Lemanu remains committed to exploring further solutions to address a range of public policy issues, including local substance abuse and treatment. He has assembled a team of experienced subject matter experts who will drive these efforts. In particular, utilizing our FaaSamoa and the local government to assist in enforcing these policies.

The Office of the Governor leads the American Samoa Policy Academy working group. It includes representatives from the Department of Public Health, Department of Human and Social Services, Department of Public Safety, Criminal Justice Planning Agency, State Medicaid Office, Department of Homeland Security (OTICIDE), Department of Legal Affairs, Department of Education, and LBJ Tropical Medical Center. Other participants include Connecticut, Michigan, and West Virginia.

The academy will kick off with a virtual meeting of the state teams and feature federal government leadership and substance use disorder experts from Wednesday, October 6 - Thursday, October 7, 2021.

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