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## Governor Lemanu Establishes American Samoa Comprehensive Substance Abuse Council

*"For decades the disease of substance abuse, specifically methamphetamines, has impacted our territory; however, we must remain vigilant and tactful in our approach to finding a solution to its devastation..."*

On May 12, 2022, the Honorable Lemanu P. S. Mauga signed Executive Order 003-2022, an Order to Establish the Comprehensive Substance Abuse Council, to coordinate American Samoa's efforts to fight drug use through education, enforcement, and treatment.

"Our battle against drugs threatens our culture, island, and children. Lieutenant Governor Talauega and I stand firm and call upon this council to do the good work needed to save lives and reduce the terrible effects of illegal drugs on families and villages. For decades the disease of substance abuse, specifically methamphetamines, has impacted our territory; however, we must remain vigilant and tactful in our approach to finding a solution to its devastation," Governor Lemanu mentioned. He continued, "I believe more involvement from our leaders in government and communities, together with the personnel and volunteers who directly interact with those impacted, will be a powerful stand against this epidemic."

Lieutenant Governor Talauega added, "We want to make it clear that the council's mission includes education, enforcement, and treatment, and supports the initiatives to assist law enforcement duties further."

The Council has four primary responsibilities:

- 1) Coordinate their agencies' activities to eliminate substance abuse in American Samoa;
- 2) Seek stakeholders in the government and the community to address substance abuse issues;
- 3) Develop policies that reduce the effect of illegal drug use and substance abuse on families and children; and
- 4) Provide advice to the Governor on legislation and activities that are designed to reduce or eliminate substance abuse in American Samoa.

The Comprehensive Substance Abuse Council will be chaired by Lieutenant Governor Talauega Ale, and will consist of the following leaders:

- 1) Lieutenant Governor, who shall chair the Council
- 2) Secretary of Samoan Affairs
- 3) Attorney General
- 4) Commissioner of Public Safety
- 5) Warden of the Bureau of Corrections
- 6) Treasurer
- 7) Director of Education
- 8) Director of Health
- 9) Director of Homeland Security
- 10) Director of Human and Social Services
- 11) Director of Port Administration
- 12) Department of Youth and Women's Affairs
- 13) Chief Executive Officer of the American Samoa Medical Center Authority (LBJ)
- 14) Director of the Criminal Justice Planning Agency
- 15) Director of the State Medicaid Agency
- 16) Chief of Staff to the Governor
- 17) Chief Legal Counsel to the Governor
- 18) Three at-large members who are appointed by the Governor for a term of one year and may include representatives of private business, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, or consumers.

The Council shall be supported by the following organizations:

- 1) The Governor's Drug Control Office
- 2) The Substance Use Policy Working Group
- 3) The Fusion Center established by Executive Order 005-2017.

In October 2021, American Samoa was selected to participate in the National Governors Association (NGA) Policy Academy on State Strategies to Improve Care for Stimulant Polysubstance use. It has provided resources for American Samoa to assess existing plans and institutional structures, and develop comprehensive strategies to address substance abuse issues.

In accordance with the Executive Order, the American Samoa Comprehensive Substance Abuse Council will meet once per quarter, and will have one annual town-hall style meeting open to the public.

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