



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Ruth Hassell-Thompson

Governor Signs Legislation Sponsored by Senator Hassell-Thompson

RUTH HASSELL-THOMPSON August 12, 2011

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The new law requires the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services to develop educational materials regarding screening for alcoholism and chemical dependency in women to health care providers

This legislation requires the Commissioner of the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, in consultation with the Commissioner of the Department of Health, to provide and publish, either electronically or in other formats, educational materials for health care providers regarding screening, assessment, and diagnosis of women for alcoholism and chemical dependency.

Alcohol and substance abuse appears to be on the rise among women. The May 2008 edition of the Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research journal published findings that show a 50% increase in the number of women reporting alcohol abuse. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, from 2004-2006; an annual average of 6.3 million women (9.4%) aged 18 to 49 needed treatment for a substance use problem. Of the women aged 18 to 49 who met criteria for needing substance use treatment, 84.2% neither received it nor perceived the need for substance use treatment.

“These figures are startling and upsetting. Part of the problem lies in the fact that oftentimes, when health care providers do screen for addiction, they typically do not know what questions to ask, or how to obtain a more accurate answer from the patient regarding alcohol or drug use,” said Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson.

Data confirms that health care providers often do not screen for addiction. According to the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, only 8.7 percent of people with drinking problems reported receiving any screening or advice from their primary-care physician.

This new law, Chapter 265 of 2011, will promote screenings by health care providers by giving providers access to educational materials that will assist them in screening for addiction. These materials will be made available to health care providers through the official website of the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services.

“The intention of this law is to assist the health care providers with their screening processes, and ultimately, get the patient into the proper treatment plan that will enable them to address their chemical dependency and recover,” continued Senator Hassell-Thompson.