To Fight HIV and Hepatitis, NASTAD Expands Membership to Cities and Counties

The National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors welcomes CDC-funded local jurisdictions. [VIDEO]

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In a first in the organization's history, several U.S. cities and counties are becoming members of the National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors, according to a NASTAD press release. They were allowed to join because NASTAD's board of directors last month changed the group's bylaws to allow jurisdictions funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to join.

The local jurisdictions that joined include Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles County, Houston, New York City, Philadelphia and San Francisco.

Founded in 1992, NASTAD is a nonprofit, nonpartisan group of public health officials who oversee HIV and hepatitis programs and are dedicated to ending those epidemics and their related issues.

"This is a huge step forward," said Murray Penner, NASTAD's executive director, in the press release. "The end of the HIV and hepatitis epidemics is for the first time within our reach, and it's hard to overstate the value of welcoming large urban jurisdictions into our membership. States and cities have learned a lot of lessons over the years about how to combat the HIV and hepatitis epidemics. By coming together, we will exponentially increase our effectiveness."

"It's been truly exciting to have been involved in the process to expand NASTAD's membership," added DeAnn Gruber, NASTAD board chair and STD/HIV program director for the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals. "By working more collaboratively with local jurisdictions, NASTAD members can continue to take the necessary steps to develop and support programs and policies that prevent new infections, ensure swift linkage to care and provide access to affordable, high-quality care for people living with HIV and hepatitis."

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You can watch Gruber’s welcome statement to new members below.

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