

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **National Association Members Expand Focus to Public Policy and Advocacy for Children and Families** *Former Deputy Drug Czar Leads Effort to Address Gap*

### **For Immediate Release**

La Jolla, Ca (02/06/2007) – A national association serving as a resource for programs and professionals who assist young people suffering from emotional difficulties called National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP), announced its intent to preserve and protect programs for children and families in need of specialized educational and treatment services and called on other children’s advocacy groups to join them in their efforts.

“Children and their families face far too many barriers to access to the care they need, sometimes being forced to relinquish custody of their young son or daughter to obtain public mental health services,” according to Jan Moss, Executive Director of NATSAP. “We seek to ensure the availability of a full range of options with accredited programs using credentialed professionals, the highest ethical standards, and principles of good practice,” Moss continued.

“The programs and professional provider members of NATSAP are committed to working with states and legislators by providing our leadership, expertise, and knowledge to prevent and address the quality and availability gaps in therapeutic programs for children,” according to John Santa, Ph.D. NATSAP 2007 Leadership Award Recipient and co-owner of Montana Academy, “We are prepared to assist anyone interested in improving the lives of children,” he added.

“Because of our experience, educators and therapists working together in specialized therapeutic schools and programs can speak with passion, expertise, and authority on the devastation caused by unmet needs and the need to provide opportunities for parental involvement, individualized care, measurable results, and collaboration with licensing boards to create an understanding of why these specialized programs are critical to the success of America’s youth in coping with the pressures of adolescence,” according to Karen Fitzhugh, Ph.D. of King George School, chair of the Public Policy Committee of NATSAP.

Andrea Barthwell, M.D., former White House Deputy Drug Czar for President George W. Bush kicked off the activity at NATSAP’s annual meeting where she encouraged attendees to join forces with others who devote themselves to families’ needs

for effective care and education of its young members. “While H.R. 1738 is a bill to ‘End Institutionalized Abuse Against Children’ and intends to improve the quality of care in therapeutic settings serving our young people, its most recent iteration could have caused a collapse of the system of care that your clients depend upon. Working with Rep. George Miller (D-CA), we can eliminate the bad programs and implement best practices in the rest,” she said.

“Anecdotes told by family members harmed in a bad program do not begin to tell the story of real pain and destruction we could experience if this industry were regulated out of existence,” she added. “We need reform to eliminate programs that prey on desperate families while preserving vital components in the continuum of care.”

While the professionals of NATSAP are offering their expertise to Governors and Legislators, they will make their members available to governmental and other organizations interested in the health and mental health of young people.

### **About NATSAP**

NATSAP was created in January, 1999 to serve as a national resource for programs and professionals who assist young people beleaguered by emotional and behavioral difficulties. NATSAP is a volunteer membership organization supporting professionals and programs in their efforts to help troubled young people. NATSAP publishes an annual directory listing all of its member programs. The directory serves to inform health care professionals and families about the many residential placement alternatives available to help struggling young people. For more information about NATSAP and its member organizations, visit the NATSAP website at [www.natsap.org](http://www.natsap.org) or call the public relations office at (770) 435-8464.