

Empire State Opioid Epidemic Innovation Challenge

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Columbia University Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science



Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez was appointed by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo on January 3, 2011, and unanimously confirmed by the New York State Senate on March 1, 2011, as Commissioner of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). Commissioner González-Sánchez is a member of the Governor's Cabinet, overseeing one of the nation's premier addiction services systems, with more than 1,600 programs that serve more than 100,000 New Yorkers daily.

Commissioner González-Sánchez brings to OASAS more than 30 years of experience in the field of behavioral health administration, policy development, and medical research, as well as her expertise in integrating accessible systems of care for New Yorkers. Under her leadership, OASAS is committed to providing quality care for the estimated 2.5 million New Yorkers who struggle with an addiction through a core system of prevention, treatment, and recovery services.

The Commissioner's overall vision is to transform a fragmented system of care into a comprehensive, integrated, patient-centered, family-focused system that is accessible and responsive to the multiple and complex needs of today's behavioral health population. The Affordable Care Act and Governor Cuomo's Medicaid Redesign are revolutionizing health care in New York State. Under Commissioner González-Sánchez's leadership, OASAS is moving Medicaid reimbursed services into managed care and integrating substance use disorder, mental health and physical health services into a cohesive system of care.

Commissioner González-Sánchez has implemented several priorities focused on high-quality care and services for the most vulnerable New Yorkers. Her priorities include establishing an effective, science-based system that integrates prevention, treatment and recovery; serving as the state resource on addiction; and leading the nation in the field of chemical dependency and problem gambling prevention, treatment and recovery. She is also dedicated to fighting prescription drug misuse; promoting the availability of permanent supportive housing; attracting, selecting and developing system-wide talent; and ensuring a system with strong return on taxpayer investment and stewardship of resources.

As Commissioner of the state agency for addiction, she established the Enhanced Oversight and Monitoring Initiative to improve programmatic and fiscal accountability and quality service delivery throughout the OASAS system. She is a strong advocate for the integration and coordination of substance use disorder, mental health and physical health services to improve system efficiencies and support outcomes benefitting patients, families and communities.

As a member of Governor Cuomo's Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT), Commissioner González-Sánchez and partners from other state agencies are creating efficient, patient-focused and recovery-oriented services for New Yorkers with substance use disorders and the family members who care for them. She serves on the MRT Behavioral Health Subcommittee and is co-chair of the Health Disparities Workgroup.

Commissioner González-Sánchez works on several state commissions, including serving as a member of the Project Approval and Oversight Panel of the Delivery System Reform Incentive Payment Program (DSRIP) and also serves as chair of the Inter-Office Coordinating Council (IOCC), which collaborates on ways to improve and coordinate services for people with multiple needs by OASAS, The NYS Office of Mental Health (OMH) and the NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). She is also a member of the New York State Behavioral Health Services Advisory Council (BHSAC), the Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council and the Employment First Commission.

Commissioner González-Sánchez also serves on the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, the Opioid Steering Committee, the Advisory Council on Underage Alcohol Consumption and Youth Substance Abuse, the Health Systems Improvement for a Tobacco-Free New York Statewide Stakeholder Workgroup, the Mental Hygiene Planning Committee, RX Stat, The Interagency Geriatric Mental Health and Chemical Dependence Planning Council, the Research Foundation for Mental Health, the New York Violent Death Reporting System Advisory Board, the Interagency LGBT Task Force, the Interagency Task Force on Human Trafficking, the Anti-Poverty Task Force, the Domestic Violence Advisory Council, the Homeless Housing and Assistance Corporation, the NY NY IV/Housing Workgroup, the Commissioners Cross Systems Youth Committee, the Council on Children and Families and the New York State Council on Veterans, Military Members and their Families.

Commissioner González-Sánchez also serves as co-chair of the Responsible Play Partnership, which addresses problem gambling in New York State, and is a member of the State Health Innovation Plan (SHIP) Council, which identifies and stimulates the spread of promising innovations in health care delivery and finance that result in optimal health outcomes for all New Yorkers.

On the national level, Commissioner González-Sánchez serves as Region II representative on the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors Board (NASADAD), representing New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The Commissioner has developed strong working relationships with leaders at The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), as well as Substance Abuse Directors from other states and territories. In September 2015, Commissioner González-Sánchez was invited by Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell to present at a national meeting on heroin and opioid abuse. In July 2013, she was accepted as an Advisory Board member for the National Hispanic and Latino Addiction Technology Transfer Centers (ATTCs), which works to develop and strengthen the workforce that provides addictions treatment and recovery support services to the Hispanic/Latino population in the United States.

Among her many professional achievements she is the recipient of numerous awards such as *2015 Public Service Leadership Award* from the Coalition of Behavioral Health Agencies and the *Improving Lives Award* from Sports Foundation Inc. Commissioner González-Sánchez also received the *Public Service Leadership Award* from 100 Hispanic Women, Inc. National; the *Exceptional Leadership and Support of Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Award* from NASADAD; the *Outstanding State Member Awardee* from the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA); the *Women's History Month Award* from New York City's Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; a *Special Recognition Award* at the Entre Nosotros Luncheon, Somos el Futuro; the *Outstanding Support to the Latino Effort* from the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC NY); and was named one of the *Top 100 Influentials* by Hispanic Business Magazine.

Commissioner González-Sánchez also received the *Hispanic Health Leadership Award* from the National Hispanic Health Foundation (NHHF); the *Mujeres Destacadas Award* from El Diario La Prensa; the *Marshall England Memorial Public Health Award* from the Commission on the Public's Health System (CPHS); the *US Congressional Award* presented by Congressman Edolphus Towns; and the *City Citation and Community Civic Award* from City Councilman Albert Vann. She was the first NYS OASAS Commissioner to be given the honor of ringing the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange to launch National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month.

Before coming to OASAS, Ms. González-Sánchez served as Commissioner of the newly formed Nassau County Department of Mental Health, Chemical Dependency, and Developmental Disabilities Services on Long Island. The agency was created by the merger of the Nassau County Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation, and Developmental Disabilities, and the Nassau County Department of Drug and Alcohol Addiction Services. Under her leadership, the new department was committed to improving the quality of care and service delivery, while also bettering the quality of life for all Nassau County residents.

Commissioner González-Sánchez holds a Master's of Social Work degree in Administration/Community Organization from the Hunter College School of Social Work; and a Master's of Science degree in Cell Biology/Cytogenetics and a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology both from Fordham University. Ms. González-Sánchez also held a faculty appointment at Cornell University Medical College as an Associate Research Scientist, where she spent eight years in the Department of Cell Biology and Anatomy performing cardiac and molecular biology research. She is the author of numerous scientific publications in medical journals and textbooks and has received recognition for her early work on DNA sequencing and cloning. She is also a Licensed Master Social Worker.