

**Testimony on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2022-23  
Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Budget**

Jennifer Smith, Secretary

House Appropriations Committee

March 3, 2022



Thank you, Chairman Saylor, Chairman Bradford, and distinguished members of the House Appropriations Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony on Governor Wolf's proposed 2022-23 budget for the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP or the department).

For those new to the committee, my name is Jennifer Smith and I have the pleasure of serving as Pennsylvania's Secretary for DDAP. Pennsylvania is only one of three states with a dedicated cabinet-level department to solely oversee drug and alcohol (or addiction) programming. Acting as the Single State Authority (SSA) for substance use disorder (SUD) services, DDAP is responsible for the administration of control, prevention, intervention, treatment, rehabilitation, research, education, and training activities within the department as well as across state agencies. We serve a critical role in coordinating efforts with the federal, state, and local levels. In addition to programmatic efforts geared toward SUD, the department also implements a compulsive and problem gambling program.

### **Pennsylvania's Drug and Alcohol System**

To better understand our department's funding, it is important to explain how Pennsylvania's drug and alcohol system is structured. Local government entities are critical partners in the provision of prevention, intervention, treatment, treatment-related, and recovery support services in Pennsylvania. DDAP has contractual agreements with 47 Single County Authorities (SCAs). These county or county-affiliated agencies plan, administer, and evaluate services at the local level. SCAs are responsible for contracting with and funding services to non-governmental agencies such as treatment and prevention providers at the local level. Each SCA determines the appropriate services and number of providers necessary to meet local needs and provides this information to the department through a yearly needs assessment process.

While DDAP receives funding through the state's proposed budget, most of the department's funding comes from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), our federal counterpart. To put this into perspective, during the last state fiscal year (SFY), \$49 million dollars was allocated to SCAs through state funding and \$137 million was allocated to SCAs through federal funding.

## **COVID-19 Impacts**

During my tenure as Secretary, a primary focus of my department has been battling the opioid and overdose crisis that has taken far too many lives in Pennsylvania. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented a variety of additional challenges for individuals with substance use disorder, those seeking treatment and resources, drug and alcohol service providers, SCAs, and recovery community organizations. Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, under Governor Wolf's leadership, we made progress by lowering the overdose death rate 18% from the height of the opioid crisis in 2017. Much of this progress was significantly set back in 2020 due to the pandemic, which can be seen in the loss of more than 5,000 Pennsylvanians to an overdose in that year alone.

Now, as we begin to evaluate overdose data for 2021, we are beginning to see a decrease in the number of overdose deaths, with a reported 4,317 lives lost to a drug overdose. While this number shows a decrease in deaths across many Pennsylvania counties, many areas of the state are seeing increased use of stimulants, including methamphetamine, as well as illicit fentanyl being mixed into the drug supply of almost all available substances without the users' knowledge.

Over the past two years, DDAP has regularly engaged with stakeholders and advocates to discuss the needs of the drug and alcohol field. Additionally, DDAP's representative at the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), has supported approximately 169 licensed treatment facilities by:

- Providing personal protective equipment (PPE), disinfectant supplies, and information regarding available test sites throughout PA;
- Facilitating larger conversations with multiple commonwealth agencies to support facilities that were dealing with numerous cases of COVID-19 among staff and residents; and
- Being a point of contact for available resources and trainings to help staff/residents deal with the pandemic.

In order to better understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities, we are in the process of a statewide listening tour. This tour is designed to meet with local SCAs, SUD treatment providers, law enforcement, prevention specialists, elected officials, Certified Recovery Specialists, and other stakeholders to learn about trends, identify gaps created as a result of the

pandemic, and use that information to craft the agency's policy and funding priorities in the years to come. To date, DDAP has held these sessions in Adams, Cambria, Carbon, Clinton, Crawford, Lycoming, Monroe, Pike, and York counties and across these counties has identified the following trends:

- Much like other businesses, SCAs have been impacted by COVID primarily through staffing and retention challenges as well as shifts in operational procedures;
- Prevention programming was greatly altered due to restrictions on in-person learning resulting in the need for new and creative ways to deliver necessary and meaningful prevention services in schools;
- Schools are still experiencing an overwhelming increase in students' need for trauma-informed care, mental health services, and intervention or treatment services for SUD;
- There is an overall lack of job training, recruitment, and retention among the drug and alcohol workforce; and
- Implementation of telehealth presented both benefits and challenges.

All in all, my staff and the entire drug and alcohol field have continued to amaze me with their tenacity, resourcefulness, and willingness to support some of Pennsylvania's most vulnerable citizens during this unprecedented time in history.

## **Department Goals**

As previously stated, our initial efforts to combat the crisis were centered around keeping people alive. We have since expanded our focus toward enhancing the quality of the drug and alcohol treatment and recovery continuum. The department's 2019-22 State Plan outlines key initiatives which have continued to drive the department in policy and decision making to improve the drug and alcohol continuum of services for Pennsylvanians. The four major goals are outlined below, and we will continue to accomplish these goals through the following strategies:

### Reduce Stigma

- Educate policymakers about treating addiction as a medical disease.
- Advocate harm-reduction strategies with proven outcomes.
- Celebrate recovery stories to empower those still struggling.

### Intensify Primary Prevention

- Expand evidence-based resources for school-aged children.
- Encourage awareness of education and support groups for our communities.
- Strengthen family-based prevention and intervention services.

### Strengthen Treatment Systems

- Increase treatment providers trained in evidence-based practices.
- Capitalize on recent system updates designed to improve patient placement and data collection methods.
- Incorporate best practices into standardized policies and procedures.
- Eliminate barriers that prevent medication-assisted treatment (MAT) from being integrated into all levels of care.
- Modernize the rate-setting process and payment model to ensure sustainability and quality.
- Expand workforce capacity and proficiency.
- Integrate quality measures.

### Empower Sustained Recovery

- Established sustainable funding and support for grassroots recovery organizations.
- Create a recovery friendly business network.
- Support the careers of certified professionals in the field of recovery.
- Aid in establishing additional recovery schools for youth.
- Promote a family-centered approach to recovery.
- Promote the pardon process.

### **Accomplishments**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we used resources and the momentum of the opioid crisis to collaborate, modernize, and innovate the drug and alcohol system to expand services across the entire continuum. That work has continued with limited roadblocks. Over the last two years we have only strengthened our push for the availability of equitable, high-quality SUD prevention, treatment, and

recovery services across the commonwealth. I'd like to take a moment to highlight our state-led accomplishments broken down by the department's four goals.

### Reduce Stigma

- Reached more than 4 million Pennsylvanians in year one of our stigma reduction campaign Life Unites Us, and improved public attitudes toward medication-assisted treatment (MAT), harm reduction tactics, and of individuals struggling with this disease;
- Expanded the scope of the Life Unites Us campaign in year two to address stigma related to stimulants and polysubstance use, issues which are on the rise in Pennsylvania and nationally;
- Promoted the benefits of harm reduction tactics such as naloxone, fentanyl test strips, and syringe services programs that include education, testing and treatment for HIV and Hepatitis C;
- Provided support for SB 926 and HB 2264 to legalize syringe services programs, and HB 1393 and SB 845 to legalize fentanyl test strips for personal use across Pennsylvania;
- Implemented Just Five to serve as an SUD education tool for commonwealth employees and was utilized by 2,954 individuals since May 2021;
- Implemented Just Five to serve as an SUD education tool for Pennsylvania's workforce and was utilized by an additional 1,200 individuals since September 2021; and
- Awarded \$1.1 million in grant funding to six SCAs to expand or create Police Diversion Programs with local law enforcement, treatment professionals, and recovery support providers to facilitate alternatives to arrest, booking, and incarceration for individuals whose minor criminal behavior is directly due to their stimulant or opioid misuse issues during the last SFY.

### Intensify primary prevention

- Developed, in partnership with the Department of Health (DOH), 14 prescribing guidelines for physicians and specialists who prescribe opioids;
- Facilitated more than 72,000 referrals through the Student Assistance Program (SAP), and SAP liaisons conducted over 21,000 screenings and assessments for behavioral health concerns during 2020-21 school year;
- Selected Medication Death and Incident Review (MDAIR) committee members required by

amendments made to Act 126 of 2020 which expanded the scope beyond methadone to all three FDA-approved medications for opioid use disorder;

- Collected more than one million pounds of unused prescription medication across more than 889 take-back boxes across all 67 Pennsylvania counties;
- Implemented a new prevention needs assessment process based on the evidence-based Strategic Prevention Framework; and
- Awarded \$287,000 to the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy; Program Evaluation and Research Unit for a five-year project to implement screening, brief intervention, referral to treatment (SBIRT) for adolescents and adults in primary care and community health settings.

#### Strengthen drug and alcohol treatment system

- Distributed approximately 22,000 two-dose kits of naloxone;
- Shifted from the Opioid Command Center to the Interagency Substance Use Response Team following the end of the Opioid Disaster Emergency Declaration to ensure continued immediate action on the addiction crisis, and are supporting the work of the Behavioral Health Taskforce for longer-term work across the entire behavioral health continuum;
- Directly referred almost 12,500 callers to treatment from our Get Help Now Hotline to SUD treatment providers in 2021, for a total of over 38,000 referrals since 2016, and the hotline has increased intakes from 40% in 2016 to 65% in 2021, indicating that more calls are resulting in connections to treatment and resources than ever before;
- Continued progress toward spring 2022 implementation of the Addiction Treatment Locator, Assessment, and Standards Platform (ATLAS), with 44% of licensed drug and alcohol treatment providers completing the Treatment Facility Survey;
- Partnered with the Liberty Mid-Atlantic High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program (HIDTA) to host more than 580 virtual attendees at Pennsylvania's 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Psychostimulant Symposium focused on addressing the rising trend of stimulant usage across the commonwealth;
- Implemented a new Quality Improvement Section within DDAP's Bureau of Quality Assurance and Administration to evaluate data and current practices to determine and make recommendations to all aspects of service delivery and internal policies/procedures;

- Implemented warm hand-off protocols across all 47 SCAs who are actively engaged with 95% hospitals in warm handoff, which has resulted in 24,275 referrals from hospitals directly to SUD treatment since January 2017;
- Adapted 16 existing training courses for virtual delivery, and began developing hybrid learning opportunities;
- Provided training to approximately 20,500 professionals in the last SFY, (the largest total number of professionals trained in a SFY in department history);
- Released recommendations on updating Pennsylvania’s SUD confidentiality policies and HB 1563, as amended, implements one of the report recommendations;
- Expanded access to MAT in primary care practices through Rural access to MAT in Pennsylvania (Project RAMP);
- Expanded MAT into all state correctional institutions and several county jails and working to have all FDA-approved types of MAT available in state correctional institutions;
- Trained more than 13,000 individuals in The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) Criteria since 2017 and launched monthly ASAM Technical Assistance webinars which has averaged 200 attendees per session;
- Expanded access to evidence-based SUD treatment through the creation of almost 250 Centers of Excellence and eight major health care systems as part of the Pennsylvania-Coordinated Medication Assisted Treatment program since 2018;
- Awarded \$2 million in funding to the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency to initiate and expand county drug courts in Blair, Forest, Greene, Mifflin, Northampton, Tioga, Wayne, and Westmoreland counties during last SFY;
- Awarded more than \$15 million in grant funding to 375 drug and alcohol treatment providers to assist with COVID-19 pandemic-related expenses during the last SFY;
- Awarded more than \$1.3 million in grant funding to two SUD Drop-In Centers to serve Philadelphia, Montgomery, Delaware, and Bucks counties to provide harm reduction services and connections to recovery and treatment services during the last SFY;
- Awarded \$12.2 million in grant funding to 12 entities to provide pregnancy support services to pregnant or postpartum women with stimulant or opioid misuse during the last SFY; and
- Awarded \$2 million in subgrants to 11 non-profit organizations to support existing and new programs tailored to the unique needs of veterans with opioid or stimulant use disorders

during the last SFY.

#### Empower sustained recovery

- Promulgated regulations in December 2021 for the licensure of recovery houses that receive funds or referrals from public sources and, as of February 14, 2022, have one licensed house and 24 applications in various stages of review;
- Concluded phase one of Recovery Rising initiative and prioritized eight key areas on which the commonwealth should focus on to embed and expand recovery support services throughout the state;
- Awarded \$2.5 million to SCAs for sustaining and expanding Recovery Support Services during the last SFY;
- Awarded \$2.9 million in grant funding to eight entities to provide Employment Support Services to individuals in recovery from SUD seeking to enter the workforce during the last SFY; and
- Awarded \$2.7 million to four Recovery Community Organizations to expand or enhance Recovery Support Services to individuals in recovery from SUD during the last SFY.

Additionally, I would be remiss if I did not touch on some of our department's accomplishments related to addressing compulsive and problem gambling:

- Established a Compulsive and Problem Gambling Section within the department with three full-time staff dedicated to the prevention and treatment of problem gambling;
- Referred more than 1,200 individuals to gambling use disorder treatment through 1-800-GAMBLER in 2020-21, a 65 percent increase from the last SFY;
- Permanently added telehealth to treatment options for problem gambling, and as of October 2021, all of the DDAP-contracted problem gambling treatment providers can offer telehealth services;
- In partnership with the Pennsylvania Lottery, reached more than 3.8 million Pennsylvanians in 2021 on social media with our campaign to raise awareness of 1-800-GAMBLER; and
- Released the first Interactive Gaming Report to provide insight into the impact of interactive gaming and gambling use disorder in Pennsylvania.

Although we are proud of the work we've accomplished at the state level, we realize the importance

of funding being directed to SCAs where they can make the biggest difference. As such, we have ensured that a significant portion, more than \$137 million, of the department's federal funding has been funneled directly to SCAs for the provision of prevention and treatment services in their local communities.

### **Proposed 2022-23 Budget**

Without continued and sustained federal funding, the modernization and collaboration of these efforts will be greatly diminished. Although we have made significant strides in Pennsylvania, our work is not done. In providing an update on the projects funded through federal grant dollars, it is important to note that while the department has received these large amounts of funding and anticipates additional funding in the near future, we continue to operate with a very limited staffing complement. The work that is produced by the staff at DDAP is something I am very proud of. As the smallest department in the commonwealth, we have made tremendous strides to better the lives of some of the most vulnerable Pennsylvanians.

In terms of the agency's operating budget, it is important to note that although DDAP has seen an influx in federal funding to support the opioid and stimulant epidemics, we are unable to use that funding for administration costs of the department. Administration costs for the department are covered through funding DDAP's annual state budget. Under Governor Wolf's proposed 2022-23 budget, he has allotted just over \$3.2 million for the department. Although it reflects a 7.9 percent increase from last year's budget, this increased funding would cover costs associated with overall salaries and salaries to cover the department's increased staff complement, shared services, and other billable costs.

On behalf of the department and the administration, thank you for your continued focus and response to the public health crisis that we face with the overdose epidemic. As outlined above, the department's priorities are aimed at increasing support for Pennsylvania's drug and alcohol treatment system in order to help individuals lead healthy, productive lives. I am committed to working with the General Assembly to improve the treatment and recovery landscape across the commonwealth and look forward to working with you to make that a reality for those in need.