

**Testimony on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2024-25
Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Budget**

Dr. Latika Davis-Jones, Secretary

House Appropriations Committee

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Thank you, Chairman Harris, Chairman Grove, and distinguished members of the House Appropriations Committee, for the opportunity to provide testimony on Governor Shapiro's proposed 2024-25 budget for the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP). My name is Dr. Latika Davis-Jones and I have the pleasure of serving as Secretary for DDAP.

At DDAP, we believe that all Pennsylvanians living with substance use disorder (SUD) deserve access to high-quality treatment no matter where they live, and that treatment and services can be a vital first step on someone's path to recovery. Governor Shapiro's proposed budget supports DDAP's mission by providing just over \$3.5 million for the Department's operations and investing \$44.7 million in state General Fund dollars for drug and alcohol programs, which is a \$103,000 increase over the current fiscal year.

As the Commonwealth's lead agency in the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan to reduce substance use and dependency across Pennsylvania, DDAP is continually working to ensure high-quality and equitable prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery resources so more Pennsylvanians can live long and healthy lives free from the chronic illness of addiction.

In addition to programmatic efforts geared toward SUD, the Department also administers a program to address compulsive and problem gambling.

Pennsylvania's Drug and Alcohol System

Local government entities are critical partners in the provision of prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support services for individuals who are uninsured or underinsured in Pennsylvania. DDAP has grant agreements with 47 Single County Authorities (SCAs), which cover all of PA's 67 counties. These county-affiliated agencies plan, administer, and evaluate SUD services at the local level and are responsible for contracting with and funding private and nonprofit providers.

While DDAP receives state funding to support these programs, most of the Department's funding comes from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

For State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2023-24, DDAP's total budget is made up of approximately 25 percent state funding and 75 percent federal funding.

Pennsylvania's Current SUD Landscape

In the last year, nearly 130,000 Pennsylvanians received SUD treatment through programs funded by both DDAP as well as the Department of Human Services (DHS), which manages the state's Medicaid managed care program, also known as HealthChoices. While strides have been made, there continues to be work that is needed to prevent and address SUDs.

Overdose Deaths

In 2022, one Pennsylvanian died of an overdose about every two hours. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health's (DOH) Fatal and Non-Fatal Drug Overdose Surveillance Interactive Data Report, in 2022:

- 5,155 Pennsylvanians lost their lives to a drug overdose;
- 70 percent were male;
- Most were between the ages 35 to 44; and
- 54 percent died at home.

In 2022, Black Pennsylvanians died from overdoses at more than double the rate of white Pennsylvanians, despite the fact that overall, white Pennsylvanians experienced higher total numbers of overdose deaths.

Preliminary data shows 3,705 Pennsylvanians died from an overdose in 2023, and this number will continue to increase as coroner/medical examiner reports are finalized.

Although overdose deaths have remained relatively consistent in recent years, we do know that evidence-based harm reduction strategies and prevention methods are proven to save lives and remain DDAP's priority despite the ever-changing drug landscape and number of illicit substances entering Pennsylvania cities and towns.

Looking Ahead

The Governor's proposed budget recognizes our commitment to providing quality services to those who need it most, specifically investing \$228,000 in recovery and \$119,000 in problem gambling supports.

DDAP knows how important having the right services to and through recovery are to one's journey. This proposed budget dedicates Departmental funds to the expansion of our Recovery Section, illustrating our dedication to recovery supports at the state level.

Finally, the Governor's 2024-25 budget proposal would invest an additional \$119,000 to DDAP for problem gambling case management services, to ensure individuals seeking help for gambling-related issues have access to financial counseling, mental health services, housing, and other resources.

Accomplishments

I'd like to take a moment to highlight our state-led accomplishments during the last SFY (2022-23).

Engagement Tour

My team and I wrapped up Phase I of DDAP's Statewide Stakeholder Engagement Tour at the end of 2023. We got out there, met with SCAs in their own neighborhoods, listened to their needs, and heard their top concerns. In addition, we gathered feedback across Pennsylvania from individuals in recovery, a full spectrum of service providers and SUD workforce, active service recipients, payors, elected officials, community leaders, and schools.

We are using all the feedback we received to make improvements in Department processes and work, as well as to change relevant regulations to reflect current language and standards to foster access, address workforce issues, and improve the quality of treatment.

Other highlights grouped by our RISE goals include the following:

Reduce Stigma

- Our stigma reduction campaign, Life Unites Us, reached more than four million Pennsylvanians to deliver information and messaging to encourage stigma reduction. More than 300 individuals in recovery, as well as their family members, recorded testimonials that were shared on the campaign's website and social media channels; and
- DDAP expanded our free SUD prevention and education tool, Just Five, by unveiling three new lessons that each address current issues in the world of SUD prevention.

Intensify Primary Prevention

- During the 2022-23 school year, schools reported 100,438 referrals through the Student Assistance Program (SAP). SAP liaisons (both drug and alcohol and mental health) conducted 32,805 screenings and assessments for behavioral health concerns; and
- Collected more than 155,000 tons of unused prescription medication across 888 take-back boxes throughout Pennsylvania counties.

Strengthen Drug and Alcohol Treatment System

- We are experiencing a 70 percent referral rate, from an emergency room into a treatment program, for our Warm Hand-Off Program, with 17,600 referrals to treatment in 2023.
- Since the Pennsylvania Overdose Prevention Program's (POPP) inception, DDAP's funding has allowed for the distribution of more than 260,000 doses of Narcan and more than 34,000 doses of Kloxxado, both used for opioid overdose reversal;
- In addition, more than 300,000 fentanyl test strips and over 290,000 xylazine test strips have been distributed to assist with harm reduction efforts;
- We've also awarded \$9 million in grant funding to four Single County Authorities (SCAs) to establish or expand crisis stabilization services for individuals with co-occurring mental health and SUDs;
- Awarded \$6 million in opioid settlement funds to 19 organizations across the Commonwealth to establish or expand SUD services, community outreach and education to underserved communities of color struggling with the opioid overdose crisis;
- Instruction on effective treatment and SUD services for pregnant women and women with

dependent children was provided to all 47 SCAs;

- Received more than 15,000 total calls to the Get Help Now hotline with 75 percent resulting in referrals to treatment. The highest number of referrals were made to withdrawal management, followed by residential treatment and outpatient resources;
- Developed a two-part webinar series to help clarify the application of confidentiality regulations for treatment and treatment-related service providers. Over 200 participants attended and provided positive feedback; and
- Opened an \$18 million SUD student loan repayment grant program early this year to assist practitioners within the SUD treatment, prevention, case management and recovery support services workforce.

Empower Sustained Recovery

- DDAP has licensed 310 recovery houses across the Commonwealth, providing safe housing and mutual support for people in SUD recovery;
- In 2023, DDAP created a Recovery Section as part of the Bureau of County Program Oversight, hiring the first recovery staff in March 2023; and
- Awarded \$4.5 million in federal State Opioid Response (SOR) funds to seven organizations for the establishment of nine regional recovery hubs to enhance resources for individuals in recovery and promote recovery within communities across Pennsylvania.

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

- Referred more than over 7,000 individuals (78%) to gambling use disorder treatment through 1-800-GAMBLER since 2020;
- Increased the reimbursement rate for problem gambling treatment providers and now offer reimbursement for the costs associated with treatment providers obtaining their international problem gambling counseling certification;
- In partnership with the Pennsylvania Lottery, reached more than 4.4 million Pennsylvanians in 2023 on social media with our campaign to raise awareness of 1-800-GAMBLER; and
- Provided a 1-800-GAMBLER media campaign toolkit to the SCAs to provide their own media campaigns.

While we have made significant strides in Pennsylvania, our work is not done, and we must remain vigilant to the ever-evolving drug misuse trends and landscape.

On behalf of the Department and the Shapiro 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 aim to increase support for Pennsylvania's drug and alcohol treatment system to help individuals lead healthy, productive lives.

I am committed to working with the General Assembly to improve access to prevention and treatment resources and improve the recovery landscape across the Commonwealth. I look forward to partnering with you to make that a reality for those in need.

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