

**NEW YORK STATE SENATE FINANCE  
AND  
ASSEMBLY WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEES  
MENTAL HYGIENE BUDGET HEARING**

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2017**

**TESTIMONY BY:  
JOHN J. COPPOLA, MSW  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**New York Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Providers, Inc.**  
11 North Pearl Street, Suite 801, Albany, New York 12207  
Phone: 518-426-3122 Fax: 518-426-1046

Good Evening. My name is John Coppola. I am the Executive Director of the New York Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers, Inc. (ASAP), the statewide association that represents the interests of substance use disorder and problem gambling prevention, treatment, and recovery support services providers from throughout New York State. Included in our membership are close to 200 agencies that provide a comprehensive continuum of services, fifteen statewide and regional coalitions of programs, and a number of affiliate and individual members.

Distinguished members of the NYS Senate and Assembly, last year when we testified at the Mental Hygiene Budget Hearing, ASA expressed great concern about the growing epidemic of prescription opioid and heroin addiction and the alarming number of associated overdose deaths. We urged you to significantly increase resources for substance use disorders prevention, treatment, and recovery support services stating that, "Families across New York State are devastated by the losses they are experiencing related to the deaths of loved ones caused by a prescription opioid or heroin overdose." We appreciate the work done by the Joint Senate Task Force on Heroin and Opioid Addiction, Governor Cuomo's Opioid and Heroin Task Force, and the Senate and Assembly Standing Committees on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse that led to the addition of close to \$25 million to the 2016-17 budget originally proposed by Governor Cuomo. Unfortunately, as we sit here this evening and look back over the past year, we can only come to the conclusion that what we did during the past year was not enough. The number of overdose deaths has increased and continued on an upward trend throughout 2016. That upward trend portends record rates of overdose death and addiction in NYS and throughout our country in 2017. **Dramatic action is needed** and indicated by the following statement from the Governor's Task Force: "Heroin and opioid addiction is now a major public health crisis in New York State. Further work must continue to fully realize the Governor's vision for a more responsive, accessible, and compassionate health care system for patients, as well as stronger education, prevention, and enforcement measures. The Task Force recommends that study and work on these issues continue as a high priority, so that New York can remain in the forefront when it comes to helping patients and their families."

The magnitude of our response to this public health crisis must at least match the magnitude of the crisis itself. Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that has approximately 100 times the potency of morphine, is increasingly being identified as a deadly ingredient in the heroin leading to overdose deaths in NYS. Carfentanil, which has 10,000 times the potency of morphine, is surfacing in parts of the United States and will be in NYS sometime soon, if not already. Professionals doing harm reduction and prevention services in our communities are fighting a forest fire with a garden hose. The task for a depleted treatment workforce is no less daunting as demand for treatment increases.

Significant resources are needed. New York State has to strengthen its prevention, treatment, and recovery service workforce and infrastructure if we are to make progress in reducing the death and addiction plaguing every county in our state. Media campaigns initiated by the Governor,

new medication assisted treatment clinics in upstate communities, new recovery centers, and other new initiatives are appreciated, however we must support existing programs that are suffering from a lack of staff and resources.

Additional prevention, treatment, and recovery support resources are needed to address not just the prescription opioid and heroin crisis, but also such profound issues as underage drinking; substance use disorders experienced by pregnant women and their newborn children; and the special needs of veterans, young adults, adolescents, the LGBTQ community and others.

Therefore, the New York Association of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Providers, Inc. recommends a significant increase in the OASAS budget to strengthen our response to this epidemic and the impact of addiction to alcohol and other drugs which cause far greater loss of life on an annual basis.

### **Strengthen the Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Workforce**

To address the need to attract and maintain full employment in substance use disorders programs, we must use innovative approaches including student loan forgiveness, scholarships for education and training, salary incentives, and other strategies to support and retain employees. By using unspent funds currently sitting in the Substance Abuse Services Fund to finance this budget request, this recommendation is revenue neutral.

*\$30 million from the Substance Abuse Services Fund (Asset Forfeiture) could be used to fund this initiative.*

### **Strengthen Prevention**

There are approximately 300 fewer school and community-based prevention professionals in NYC today than there were in 2009. Suburban and rural communities throughout NYS are experiencing the same staffing inadequacies. A substantial investment is needed to meet the demand for more prevention services to target New York's public health crisis related to prescription opioids, heroin, synthetic cannabinoids, underage drinking, and other alcohol and other drug related health issues at all stages of life and in all demographic groups.

Add 300 prevention professionals to New York's school and community-based prevention programs to address unmet need and increased demand for prevention service. Specifically, add:

- 100 prevention professionals to be deployed in NYC public and parochial schools and 50 in public and parochial schools outside of NYC in high need schools particularly those that currently have NO prevention personnel
- 100 prevention professionals to be deployed to community-based prevention programs outside of NYC with emphasis on services in high-need communities and 50 prevention professionals to be deployed to community-based prevention programs in high-need NYC neighborhoods.

*Cost for 150 prevention professionals in NYC ( $\$75,000 \times 150 = \$11.25$  million) and 150 prevention professionals outside NYC ( $\$60,000 \times 150 = \$9$  million) is \$20.25 million*

### **Strengthen Treatment**

ASAP is pleased that progress is being made in eliminating waiting lists for medication assisted treatment. We remain concerned, however, about waiting lists for adolescents, young adults, women with children, and others hard pressed to find treatment when they need it; many times

not for lack of beds or licensed capacity, but because of staffing shortages. The elimination of waiting lists must continue to be a priority.

Add 400 treatment professionals to New York's continuum of treatment services to address the heroin/prescription opioid crisis and the demands for treatment for persons addicted to alcohol and other drugs. Specifically, add:

- 100 treatment professionals to be deployed in NYC outpatient programs and 100 treatment professionals in outpatient programs outside of NYC to provide clinic based services and offsite outreach to homeless shelters, criminal justice facilities, hospitals and other setting where persons with addiction can be screened and referred for treatment.
- 100 treatment professionals to be deployed in NYC inpatient and residential treatment programs and 100 treatment professionals to be deployed outside in inpatient and residential treatment programs outside of NYC to reduce the need for overtime and to enable enhance services

*Cost for 200 treatment professionals in NYC ( $\$75,000 \times 200 = \$15$  million) and 200 treatment professionals outside NYC ( $\$60,000 \times 200 = 12$  million) is \$27 million*

### **Strengthen Recovery Support Services**

Many counties in NYS do not have a recovery center to provide recovery supports to recovering persons and their families. ASAP recommends that start-up funds be added to the budget so that 10 more of these counties can create recovery centers.

*Cost for 10 recovery centers:  $10 \times \$350,000 = \$3.5$  million*

Certified Recovery Peer Advocates and Certified Addiction Recovery Coaches are increasingly in demand as New York adopts a recovery oriented system of care. ASAP recommends a peer workforce initiative to help train and certify 1000 new peer advocates.

*Cost for 1000 candidates certification test and fees:  $1000 \times \$200 = \$200,000$*

### **Health Care Facility Transformation Program**

The proposed budget builds on last year's health care facility transformation program, which totaled \$200M (\$30M for community based health care providers including OASAS clinics). The 2017-18 funding level proposed would expand to \$500M, with a flat funding recommendation of \$30M for community based health care providers. Given the extraordinary interest demonstrated by community-based organizations, whose proposals for funding amounted to more than \$400 million for the first solicitation of proposals, we recommend that community-based have access to the increased pool.

*ASAP recommends that \$125M of the proposed funds should be designated for community-based organizations.*

### **Health Care Regulation Modernization**

The Governor's proposal to establish a 25-person team to advise on the restructuring of statutes, regulations and policies relating to governance and oversight of health care facilities and home care suggests an inclination toward efficiency, common sense, and an opportunity to improve service outcomes. The SUD service provider system is very interested in identifying regulations and infrastructure that might be adjusted in a manner that creates better use of resources and an opportunity for reinvestment. The proposed health care regulation

modernization team will address a number of issues of concern to the SUD field such licensure procedures, alternative models of care delivery, and others. We will work with OASAS, DOB, the Senate, and the Assembly to identify opportunities for change that could result in savings that could be reinvested in prevention, treatment, and recovery support services.

We appreciate that the Governor's budget proposal includes funding to offset the cost associated with the increase in the NYS minimum wage. We are also encouraged that the budget proposal includes \$30 million to: add 80 new residential beds; 600 additional Opioid Treatment Program slots; 10 new regional coalitions and partnerships to increase collaboration among families, providers, schools, law enforcement, and State and local leaders; 10 new navigator programs to provide assistance regarding insurance coverage and treatment; 10 new peer engagement programs; 8 new Clubhouses (five in NYC; two in the Mohawk Valley and one in each of the other regions of the State); 5 new Recovery and Outreach Centers; 10 new Urgent Access Centers; and 2 Recovery High Schools (opening in 2019). The \$30 million increase for these initiatives appears to be primarily the result of new federal funds made available by Congress. An investment is needed by New York State to address the needs we have articulated.

### **Managed Care**

Service providers continue to be challenged by the implementation of business models that have been adjusted to the demands managed care. Assistance and technical support is still needed with financial, organizational and technological aspects of the transition. Cash flow and revenue cycle management are an ongoing concern. We are pleased that the Executive Budget Proposal includes extension of the APG rates. We ask consideration of the following:

- Increased standardization of contract language, billing, authorizations (format and process), claims processing, documentation requirements, and appeals processes to minimize administrative burden
- Funding for OASAS to support the MIS infrastructure needs, personnel, licensing fees, and other expenses related to support and maintenance of electronic health records. Community-based organizations should have access to the same resources made available to hospitals for personnel and infrastructure support
- Funding to support business and services delivery transformation such as development of management services organizations, independent practice associations

### **Problem Gambling Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services**

As New York moves to open its new casino gambling venues, a statewide continuum of problem gambling services that includes a public awareness campaign, primary prevention, early intervention and treatment, recovery support, and other needed services must be put fully supported.

Approximately one million New Yorkers currently have a gambling problem, a problem that will only grow as casinos are established. Projected funding from newly installed video gaming portals is not a significant enough investment to combat this serious problem.

*ASAP recommends funding adequate for a comprehensive continuum of problem gambling prevention, community education, treatment, and recovery services available in every county.*

***Additional Recommendations***

- Ensure that SUD service providers are more meaningfully incorporated into the work of all 25 performing provider networks and that they are appropriately compensated.
- Make the exemption from social work scope of practice restrictions in OASAS licensed programs permanent to avert a worsening of the workforce crisis experienced in the field. ASAP supports a permanent exemption from the restrictive scope of service provisions or statutory changes related to licensing so that substance use disorders service providers can be spared from having to lay-off thousands of qualified workers

In each of the past three years, when ASAP testified before the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees, we urged the Senate and the Assembly to take action to address New York's prescription drug and heroin addiction and overdose epidemic. We were concerned that the Governor's proposed budget did not adequately respond to the crisis. We are back this year with the same request. Please give us the resources needed to address New York State's number one public health problem, the epidemic of death and addiction related to heroin and prescription opioids.

Thank you for the increased concern and attention, the many public forums you conducted, and in advance, for the work you will do during this legislative session. Thank you for your commitment to community service and for all the work you do on budget and other important legislative matters. We are committed to working with you to ensure that the communities you represent receive the best possible substance use disorder and problem gambling prevention, treatment, and recovery services. Thank you.