

TASC

of the capital district, inc.

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Testimony

**Governor's Executive Budget 2021-2022: Public Protection
February 10, 2021**

**Jessica Song, Executive Director of Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities
(TASC) of the Capital District, Inc.**

Senate Finance Committee Chair Krueger, Assembly Ways and Means Chair Weinstein, Senate Codes Chair Bailey, Senate Crime Victims, Crime and Correction Chair Salazar, Assembly Codes Chair Dinowitz, Assembly Correction Chair Weprin, and distinguished members of the Legislature:

Thank you for allowing Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities (TASC) of the Capital District to submit written testimony to the Public Protection Joint Legislative Budget Hearing. My name is Jessica Song, Executive Director of TASC.

BACKGROUND

As mentioned in past testimony, coordination of court, treatment and social services requires a specialized combination of expertise with justice stakeholders as well as with the substance abuse, mental health and social services communities. In the Capital District, TASC has been providing court-based case management services as an alternative to incarceration (ATI) program since 1984.

Akin to resource coordinators in specialty courts, TASC is uniquely able to provide case management services to criminal justice stakeholders in the Capital District (including judges, defense attorneys, prosecution, probation and parole) seeking alternatives to incarceration (ATI) or reentry services for specialized populations.

Either pre-trial or for alternative sentencing, justice stakeholders can refer defendants who are in need of substance abuse and/or mental health treatment. **No other agency in the Capital District provides TASC's wraparound services to criminal justice stakeholders.**

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More specifically, TASC assists criminal justice stakeholders in:

- balancing community-based treatment and accountability for offenders who are dually diagnosed with substance abuse and co-occurring mental health treatment (thereby providing the opportunity for treatment, reducing costs, recidivism and promoting community safety)
- providing an independent level of care recommendation by working with collateral providers (matching the appropriate treatment dosage)
- serving as a vehicle for coordinating decision-making and intervention strategies for justice stakeholders (sharing treatment planning information is critical to moving a case forward, especially for defendants with open matters in multiple jurisdictions)
- and continuing case management support (including treatment monitoring and progress reports to all courts) during the entire continuum of care or until the underlying criminal justice matter is resolved

When a justice stakeholder refers a defendant to TASC, the process is as follows:

- A Referral Form is received from a justice stakeholder (i.e., interested party to the case)
- A RAP sheet is pulled through eJustice NY to identify all open matters, all justice stakeholders and any holds (that would prohibit release to treatment and need to be satisfied)
- An objective and comprehensive risks and needs evaluation is completed (referrals usually have high risk and needs with complicated)
- Possible barriers to treatment and gaps in services are identified
- Records are obtained from prior providers (e.g., Medical, Mental Health, Substance Abuse Treatment)
- Collateral Information from supervision agency (if any) and emergency contact (often a family member) is obtained
- An evidence based OASAS Level of Care and Drug Treatment Referral (LOCADTR) review is completed with the County Drug & Alcohol Coordinator in the District of Fiscal Responsibility (if residential treatment is indicated)
- An ATI plan is Submitted (to Courts, Attorneys, NYS DOCCS, Probation)
- The plan must be approved by the interested parties
- Treatment Referrals are then submitted based on the approved level of care
- Phone screenings with appropriate treatment facilities are coordinated
- Treatment bed is coordinated (including direct transport and a warm handoff to residential treatment facilities)

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- Release from Custody is coordinated (if needed with releasing authority)
- A treatment mandate letter is obtained if needed for insurance purposes
- TASC's team provides weekly Treatment Monitoring and Progress Reporting to all justice stakeholders
- Supervised Alcohol & Drug Testing is provided (as needed)
- A Higher Level of Care can be coordinated as a graduated sanction (if needed)
- Appropriate aftercare planning is coordinated

CONTINUED FINANCIAL UNCERTAINTY

To maintain our critical services, TASC has received significant financial support from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) with secondary financial support through subcontracts from the County of Rensselaer and the New York State Unified Court System.

In 2019, however, TASC faced a severe funding shortfall that jeopardized TASC's existence. Due to the tremendous efforts of the Legislature, TASC was allocated \$200,000 in the 2019-2020 enacted budget and an additional \$200,000 in the 2020-2021 enacted New York State budget. Securing these legislative additions was critical in providing confidence that TASC could continue providing essential ATI and reentry services in 2019 and 2020.¹

For 2021, TASC is again faced with an unfortunate predicament due to the fact that DCJS has committed all of its funding for ATI and reentry services programming through 2022. Additionally, due to the pandemic, there was an unexpected setback in our ability to deliver Jail-based Cognitive Behavioral Intervention services, resulting in a loss of milestones-based grant reimbursement; since March 2020, the Rensselaer County Jail has been closed to outside service providers as part of its safety protocol. Additionally, due to the pandemic, there was a 6 month delay on the Rensselaer County Felony Treatment Court grant; this created a further gap in operational funding.

As a result, TASC is respectfully requesting that each house of the Legislature allocate \$300,000 in their respective one-house budget proposals and ultimately the enacted budget to TASC.

¹ To date, we are still awaiting full distribution of these monies from DCJS. Any and all efforts to ensure these monies are fully distributed/reappropriated in accordance with previously enacted New York State budgets would be greatly appreciated.

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TASC also requests that this funding be authorized in such a way as to allow for flexibility to respond to unmet and emerging needs. This funding will ensure that TASC can continue to deliver its essential services to the Capital District in 2021, and avoid insolvency and the layoff of six individuals.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and allowing me to provide information regarding TASC of the Capital District- a proven ATI and reentry provider in the Capital District for 37 years.