

TASC

of the capital district, inc.

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Testimony

**Governor's Executive Budget 2024-2025: Public Protection
January 25, 2024**

**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 Dilan, 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

In the Capital District, TASC has been providing alternatives to incarceration (ATI) services by way of court-based case management for specialized populations since 1984.

The purpose of this program is to expand access to substance use disorder (SUD) treatment for individuals in the criminal justice system with a SUD and/or co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders who are eligible for community-based services. Individuals can be referred for pre-trial, alternative sentencing, and reentry.

Akin to resource coordinators in specialty courts, TASC is able to offer wraparound treatment planning services to courts in otherwise underserved upstate counties.

As mentioned in past testimony, the coordination of court, treatment, and social services requires a specialized combination of expertise with justice stakeholders as well as with substance abuse, mental health, and social services communities. Using evidenced-based practices, TASC provides assessment, independent OASAS level of care planning, referrals to appropriate programs based on criteria, transport coordination, and progress monitoring for courts.

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No other agency in the Capital District provides TASC's wraparound services directly to criminal justice stakeholders.

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 disorders (thereby providing the opportunity for treatment, reducing costs, recidivism and promoting community safety)
- providing an independent level of care determination by collaborating with community-based providers (based on criteria and 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 and efficiently addressing all open matters including active warrants)
- and continuing case management support (including treatment monitoring and progress reports to all courts in multiple jurisdictions) 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., an interested legal party to the case)
- A RAP sheet is pulled through eJusticeNY 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
- Possible barriers to treatment and gaps in services are identified (referrals often have complicated coordination needs)
- Records are obtained from prior providers (e.g., medical, mental health, substance use disorder treatment) for referral purposes
- Collateral Information from the 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 and/or Probation as appropriate)

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- A global treatment related disposition must be approved by all interested parties
- Treatment Referrals are then submitted to programs 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)
- Release from Custody is coordinated with releasing authority (if needed)
- A treatment mandate letter is obtained 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 for continuity of care

TASC's ATI model is based on critical elements fundamental to integrating the criminal justice and substance abuse treatment systems, holding both defendants and systems accountable through the implementation of client-specific case management. The ultimate goal is to safely manage offenders in the community by balancing intervention opportunities with controlled supervision.

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 (through 2022).

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 last five enacted New York State budgets. Securing these legislative additions was critical in providing confidence that TASC could continue providing essential ATI and reentry services in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023.

For 2024, TASC is again faced with the unfortunate predicament of financial uncertainty. TASC has received some recent financial support from the DCJS for 2024, which it is extremely grateful for, but there remains a funding gap to ensure critical ATI and reentry services can remain operational through the end of the year.

As a result, TASC is again respectfully requesting that each house of the Legislature allocate

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\$300,000 in their respective one-house budget proposals and, ultimately, the enacted budget to TASC.

TASC also requests that this funding be authorized in such a way as to allow for flexibility in responding to unmet and emerging needs. This funding will ensure that TASC can continue to deliver its essential services to the Capital District in 2024 and avoid insolvency and the layoff of four staff and five contracted individuals.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for allowing me to provide information regarding TASC of the Capital District - a proven ATI and reentry provider in the Capital District for 40 years.