



Office of Addiction Services and Supports

**Testimony of Arlene González-Sánchez, MS, LMSW
NYS OASAS Commissioner**

**Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Mental Hygiene
FY 2021 Executive Budget Proposal Testimony**

**Monday, February 3, 2020 11:00 a.m.
Legislative Office Building, Albany, NY
Hearing Room B**

Good morning Senator Krueger, Assembly Member Weinstein, Senator Harckham, Assembly Member Rosenthal and distinguished members of the Senate and Assembly. My name is Arlene González-Sánchez, and I am the Commissioner of the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports, or OASAS.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to present Governor Cuomo's Fiscal Year 2021 Executive Budget as it pertains to OASAS.

The Governor's Executive Budget proposes that OASAS receive over \$821 million, which includes \$140 million for State Operations, \$90 million for Capital projects, and \$591 million for Aid to Localities.

The proposed Executive Budget will enable us to continue funding our prevention, treatment and recovery programs including the increase in the minimum wage for OASAS-funded providers, as well as targeted salary increases for support, direct care and clinical staff. The Budget also supports increased spending for capital projects, consistent with the Agency's Five-Year Capital Plan, including over 200 residential treatment beds expected to open throughout the State over the next three years.

The Executive Budget establishes a new fund for the collection of fines levied for violations of existing State and federal behavioral health parity laws. Monies from this fund would be used for initiatives supporting further parity implementation, including the Ombudsman Program.

The Governor has proposed legislation to add 26 additional fentanyl analogs to the State schedules of Controlled Substances. This is especially crucial in the fight against the opioid epidemic since the majority of all overdose deaths in New York State involved the use of substances containing fentanyl.

We will continue to enhance access to medication assisted treatment (MAT), increase prescriber education and resources, and train Individuals in the use of Naloxone as part of our continued effort to combat the opioid crisis.

Through our ongoing work, we are making measurable progress. For the first time in years, we are starting to see a reduction in opioid overdose deaths.

We have accomplished much of this progress through our Centers of Treatment Innovation or COTIs, which offer expanded access to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) services through mobile treatment, telepractice, and peer services.

Counties served by COTIs have seen a 25 percent decline in opioid-related overdose deaths and a 48 percent decline in opioid overdose emergency department (ED) visits. This year, we are expanding COTIs statewide.

Today, we announced the availability of funding to establish one mobile treatment vehicle in each of the 10 Economic Development Regions in New York, and to develop telepractice capability in every county in the State.

We have also facilitated collaborations between Emergency Departments (ED) and OASAS-certified treatment programs to enhance medical providers' ability to offer MAT. EDs can begin induction on medication to treat Opioid Use Disorder, and with the help of peers, provide a supportive transition to ongoing treatment.

Another area that I would like to highlight is our efforts to establish and support MAT in State and local correctional facilities. Currently, MAT is offered in 11 State facilities and 52 County Correctional Systems, including New York City.

We are currently working with New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) and Department of Health to implement a buprenorphine program. Medical staff at seven facilities have received training on buprenorphine. This will permit individuals who were maintained on buprenorphine while incarcerated in a county jail to continue their treatment when transferred to State custody.

OASAS is also working closely with DOCCS to initiate an OTP inside a correctional facility. This would be the first State-operated OTP in a correctional facility in the country.

As we all know, recovery supports are crucial. Over the past year, we have opened 18 new recovery centers for a total of 32 recovery centers serving more than 50,000 individuals across the State.

The Agency has also implemented a multi-faceted approach to prevention, reaching youth, families and communities across the State through classroom-based curricula, school-wide environmental activities, and individualized prevention support for at-risk students.

All of these services would not be possible without a dedicated SUD workforce. At OASAS, we are proactively finding ways to support employers and staff. Last week, we announced the award of over \$300,000 in scholarship funding to support the professional development of employees at OASAS-certified organizations.

Finally, we continue developing public education campaigns to address stigma, raise community awareness about addiction and provide information on where to get help. In 2020, plans are underway to launch new campaigns to address many common misconceptions about addiction prevention, treatment and recovery.

As you can see, we have been working on expanding and enhancing our services across New York State. And under Governor Cuomo's leadership and with your

support, we continue to make an aggressive push to confront the opioid crisis and save lives.

We look forward to your continued partnership as we advance these priorities.

Thank you.