



Office of Addiction Services and Supports

**Testimony of Dr. Chinazo Cunningham
NYS OASAS Commissioner**

Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Mobile Sports Wagering

January 31, 2023, 9:30am

Senator Addabbo, Assemblyman Pretlow and members of the Senate and Assembly Committees on Racing and Wagering, as Commissioner of the NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS), I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony related to the budget impact of mobile sports betting.

OASAS oversees a comprehensive system of prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery addiction services. The system includes services specifically designed to address problem gambling.

For Fiscal Year 2022-2023, the OASAS budget included over \$9.6 million for problem gambling services. We received \$6M from state revenues collected through mobile sports betting.

Since mobile sports betting is a new initiative, not only in New York State but across the country, education, raising awareness, and collecting data to analyze its impact are particularly important.

In 2022, OASAS launched public awareness campaigns for the Super Bowl, and again in the fall for the start of the National Football League season, running through the NCAA Basketball Championship Tournament. The *Stick with the Game Plan* campaign is aimed at reminding people to gamble responsibly by setting financial and time limits, not drinking or using other substances while gambling, and that gambling is not legal for those under 21. This campaign is being repeated in 2023 to run from the Super Bowl through the NCAA Basketball Championships. The campaign will be expanded to more media outlets to reach a larger audience.

In addition, to help educate the OASAS provider system, a Mobile Sports Betting webinar was conducted for the prevention community. The webinar was conducted in March in recognition of the 2022 Problem Gambling Awareness Month.

Looking ahead, to further help us understand the impact of increased gambling activities in New York, OASAS will be hosting a series of listening sessions with stakeholders to discuss problem gambling prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services.

OASAS will also implement a Gambling Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (GBIRT) pilot program. This initiative will be in collaboration with a casino, OASAS funded recovery centers, and college campuses. GBIRT, modeled on the very effective SBIRT assessment tool, helps to identify individuals with or at risk for developing problem gambling, provides a brief intervention to reduce risk, and refers those with problem gambling to treatment.

We are very focused on reaching and educating individuals about the risks associated with gambling prior to legal age. Those efforts include developing a guidance document for the New York State Department of Education to raise awareness and provide information related to underage gambling. OASAS has made resources more readily available on the agency website with a prompt at the top of the homepage.

Since implementation of mobile sports betting in New York State in January of 2021, OASAS has been closely monitoring data related to requests for information and referrals, as well as treatment for problem gambling. Though the number of calls to the OASAS HOPEline and the number of individuals receiving treatment have remained fairly stable, OASAS has been expanding and enhancing access to ensure that the system is prepared to meet the current and potential future need for services.

To ensure that individuals can obtain resources including information and referrals to treatment services, OASAS increased funding for seven Regional Problem Gambling Resource Centers and/or Recovery Centers. These centers are an important part of the OASAS system that help make crucial linkages to a range of programs, services, and supports.

The OASAS treatment system includes a variety of services tailored to meet an individual's unique needs. We know 'one size doesn't fit all,' therefore, it is very important to offer options in intensity and service delivery. Our current treatment system includes:

- 36 outpatient programs that specialize in gambling treatment;
- treatment availability at all 12 state-operated OASAS ATCs, inpatient services at one ATC;
- collaboration with 129 private practitioners, overseen by the NY Council on Problem Gambling, that receive specialized training and approval from OASAS to receive referrals from Problem Gambling Resource Centers (PGRC); and
- specialized credential for gambling (CASAC-G).

Moving forward, OASAS remains committed to ensuring that there is a comprehensive range of services rooted in equity and based on a data-driven approach that meets people where they are. OASAS will also work to ensure that all available resources are used to best serve those in need.

We appreciate our collaborative partners, including the State Legislature, that support this important ongoing work. We look forward to continuing to work with you in the weeks and months ahead.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted by,
Dr. Chinazo Cunningham
Commissioner
NYS Office of Addiction Services and Supports