



Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

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

**Joint Legislative Budget Hearing on Mental Hygiene
SFY 2019-2020 Executive Budget Proposal Testimony**

**Thursday, February 7, 2019 11:30 a.m.
Legislative Office Building, Albany, NY
Hearing Room B**

Good morning Chairs Krueger, Weinstein, Harckham, 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 Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, or OASAS.

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to present Governor Cuomo's 2019-2020 Executive Budget as it pertains to OASAS.

Before I discuss the specific details of the upcoming Executive Budget, I want to take a moment to share with you our accomplishments to date.

We have opened new detox services; expanded mobile treatment units; increased the use of peer-based interventions; expanded treatment for individuals re-entering communities from incarceration; and opened new residential treatment facilities for women and their children.

To improve access to services, we have awarded fourteen 24/7 Open Access Centers, seven of which are operational, and seven more that are in various stages of development. These Centers provide on demand engagement, assessment, and referral services to people in need of help for addiction.

In addition, we developed 20 Centers of Treatment Innovation (COTI) serving 35 counties, offering access to treatment via tele-practice, Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) and peer support services. These services are being supported by 81 mobile treatment and transportation vehicles. We plan to make similar services available in every county this year.

To increase the availability of buprenorphine prescribers we have trained approximately 280 physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners, bringing the total to over 5,000 statewide.

We funded addiction prevention services in over 1,700 public and private schools serving approximately 454,000 youth during this past school year. These programs include classroom curriculum, schoolwide activities, and individualized prevention support for at-risk youth.

In addition, our youth clubhouses provide safe environments for at-risk youth to receive prevention and recovery supports. Last year there were over 33,800 visits to Clubhouses across the State.

We have awarded seven problem gambling resource centers throughout the state, four of which are operational, and three more that are set to open by August. These centers increase engagement and support for people in need of problem gambling services.

And we are continuing public education campaigns to address stigma, raise community awareness about addiction and provide information on where to get help.

So, together we have accomplished a great deal but there's still more to be done. Under Governor Cuomo's leadership and with the support of the New York State Legislature, we continue to make an aggressive push to confront the opioid crisis.

The Governor's 2019-2020 Executive Budget proposes that OASAS receive over \$802 million, which includes \$138 million for State Operations, \$90 million for Capital projects, and \$574 million for Aid to Localities. In addition, our providers collect more than \$800 million in Medicaid and private insurance funding that supports addiction treatment and recovery services.

We will open nearly 200 new residential treatment beds this year. Additionally, 260 beds, including 84 detox beds and 176 residential beds are in various stages of development. We are also in the process of awarding another 40 beds. These beds will add to the more than 11,400 beds operating in our residential continuum of care.

The Executive Budget will enable us to enhance our outreach and engagement efforts to homeless individuals with opioid use disorder. OASAS and the State Department of Health will partner with New York City and community-based organizations to develop a pilot project to engage homeless individuals who are living on the streets and provide them with access to MAT services.

We will also enhance MAT options for persons in correctional custody. We are working with several County correctional facilities (Albany, Monroe, Onondaga, Suffolk, Nassau, Saratoga and others) to start methadone and/or buprenorphine programs. We will further support access to MAT by encouraging the use of all three medication options (methadone, buprenorphine and long acting injectable naltrexone) in 49 out of 55 county correctional facilities, and Rikers Island.

Furthermore, six State correctional facilities (Queensboro, Edgecombe, Hale Creek, Orleans, Bedford Hills and the Willard Drug Treatment Campus) currently make methadone or long acting injectable naltrexone available to persons under custody. This year DOCCS, with OASAS support, will expand methadone availability to Elmira and three additional State correctional facilities.

This Budget also continues to support the Office of the Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Ombudsman Program to help individuals, families, and health care providers with their legal rights related to insurance coverage and denials. Since the program launched this past September, it has helped 160 individuals.

I'm pleased to announce that yesterday we issued Request for Applications (RFAs) with more than \$7.5 million available in funding to support a series of initiatives including:

- A program to facilitate buprenorphine induction in hospital Emergency Departments with linkage to community-based treatment centers;
- The establishment of MAT services in Federally Qualified Health Centers in partnership with OASAS-certified providers;
- The expansion of prevention services in classrooms via the PAX Good Behavior Game;
- Training and delivery of the Strengthening Families Program offering SUD support and services to upstate families living in permanent supportive housing;
- And the creation of new peer-driven recovery programs for youth and young adults.

We are also pleased that the Executive Budget includes support for a tax credit to employers as an incentive to hire individuals in recovery from substance use disorder.

Additionally, Article VII bills have been submitted to eliminate prior insurance authorization for MAT, limit outpatient co-pays and require hospitals to develop protocols to improve access to MAT, discharge planning and referral to services from emergency departments.

In conclusion, the 2019-2020 Executive Budget includes funding to support OASAS' continued work to advance our key initiatives and tackle the opioid epidemic. We look forward to your continued partnership as we advance these priorities.

Thank you.