

Testimony on the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget Proposal for the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs

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House Appropriations Committee

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Pennsylvania
**Department of Drug and
Alcohol Programs**

Thank you, Chairman Harris, Chairman Struzzi, and distinguished members of the House Appropriations Committee. I am Dr. Latika Davis-Jones, Secretary of the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs. It is my pleasure to provide testimony today on Governor Shapiro's proposed state budget.

The mission of the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs is to ensure substance use disorder (SUD) and problem gambling resources are available to everyone in the Commonwealth, regardless of their geographic location, socioeconomic status, gender, race, or cultural identity. All individuals deserve access to high-quality, evidence-based, person-centered services. When individuals seek SUD treatment but cannot obtain insurance coverage from private payers or Medicaid, DDAP rises to the occasion, providing funding that allows such individuals to receive care. Further, through grant opportunities and trainings, the department ensures supportive resources are available to assist Pennsylvanians and their families throughout the treatment and recovery process.

Governor Josh Shapiro's proposed budget provides approximately **\$331 million** for substance use and problem gambling services and supports. These funds will be utilized in five key areas: **prevention, intervention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery support services**. We thank Governor Shapiro and the members of the General Assembly for their continued commitment and support in providing adequate funds to address the many challenges facing someone who struggles with SUD or problem gambling.

The department operates under four core guiding principles, collectively known as RISE: Reducing stigma; Increasing prevention; Strengthening the treatment system; and Empowering sustained recovery. These concepts drive our efforts to combat the drug overdose and opioid crises. These principles also strengthen the continuum of care for substance use and problem gambling treatment and recovery services.

The Governor's budget maintains \$48.347 million in state funds to advance each of the RISE principles.

Reducing Stigma: We know that stigma can prevent someone from seeking help. We also understand the power of firsthand stories from people with shared life experiences. A key strategy to address stigma is our stigma reduction campaign called Life Unites Us. Recorded testimonials from people in recovery are shared across various social media platforms to deliver a powerful

message that treatment works, help is just one call away, and recovery is possible. In state fiscal year (SFY) 2025-26, more than 500,000 people viewed these anti-stigma-inspired messages. When individuals facing the disease of addiction hear or see that it's OK to talk about their struggle, walls come down and people not only feel a little bit more empowered to reach out, but also, they know there is a future beyond their current reality.

Increasing Prevention: Research shows SUD often begins as a pattern of misuse of both legal and illegal substances. Risk factors may include chronic health diseases, environmental factors, family history, health-related social needs, grief, trauma, and loss. The department allocates funds to local drug and alcohol offices, known as Single County Authorities (SCAs), to deliver evidence-based and evidence-informed SUD prevention programs. School-based programs continue to be a primary focus of SCAs' prevention funding. The Student Assistance Program (SAP) conducts SUD and mental health screenings and assessments for behavioral health concerns. In the 2024-25 school year, there were over 95,389 referrals to SAP.

Strengthening the Treatment System: Improving access to SUD treatment services is a fundamental priority for DDAP. We have grant agreements with 47 SCAs, which together cover all 67 Pennsylvania counties. The SCAs are responsible for the planning, administration, and evaluation of SUD and problem gambling needs at the local level. DDAP allocates state and federal funding to these county-affiliated agencies to deliver and/or contract with local providers to deliver SUD and gambling prevention and treatment services. Currently, Pennsylvania has 765 licensed SUD treatment providers that offer inpatient and outpatient services. Additional initiatives include:

- Get Help Now helpline: Nearly 9,000 calls received during SFY 2025-26, which resulted in a 69% referral rate to treatment. The hotline operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to assist individuals with accessing services and supports.
- 1-800-GAMBLER hotline: Assists people in accessing treatment for problem gambling. To date SFY 2025-26, 2,447 people have called the hotline, 73% of which were referred to treatment. This is a 3% increase in calls over the previous state fiscal year, which coincides with the increased availability of online gambling and sports betting in PA.
- Pregnant Women and Women with Children/Maternal Health: Over \$8 million is estimated for SFY 2026-27 to support treatment and case management services, along with expanded resources to meet the needs of pregnant people to complement other Commonwealth-wide efforts to address the needs of this population.

- An environmental scan of SUD needs was conducted in the state’s maternity deserts during SFY 2025-26. Interventions are being developed in SFY 2026-27 to increase access to perinatal SUD treatment in these geographic regions, such as telehealth and mobile health solutions, whole person care programs, maternal health trainings, and peer support services.
- Workforce Development:
- Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP): The substance use treatment workforce is on the decline, with a growing number of employees exiting the field for less demanding, higher paying jobs. To reinvigorate this industry, DDAP invested more than \$40 million into its SLRP over several years, helping to retain 675 professionals working in the field.
 - Workforce Pipeline: DDAP is funding fellowships and practicums for students of Waynesburg and Carlow universities to receive their master’s degrees in addiction counseling. It is anticipated that this initiative will add at least 75 SUD treatment professionals to the workforce by 2027.
 - Gambling Treatment: The state is losing gambling treatment providers due to changing career pathways and an aging workforce. DDAP updated its service contracting in SFY 2025-26 to increase available gambling treatment and intervention services throughout the state. When the new contract becomes available this year, we have 28 new problem gambling treatment providers ready to contract with us for services.
 - Problem Gambling Case Management: DDAP is preparing a contract that will make problem gambling case management services available for the first time in the state. These services will provide guidance to individuals and their family members during the treatment and recovery process, as well as assist individuals with their non-treatment needs, including physical health care, transportation, childcare, and financial literacy. It is estimated that case management services will become available in July 2026.

Empowering Sustained Recovery: Key factors, such as housing, employment, meaningful interpersonal connections, community, and family support, can impact someone’s ability to maintain recovery. Over the past decade, Pennsylvania has built a strong recovery support system that continues to evolve with the needs of its residents.

- Act 59 of 2017 created a licensure program for drug and alcohol recovery houses that receive public funds or referrals. A recovery house is a residence where people can live and work on their recovery with peers. They may receive support at the recovery house, but treatment is accessed through providers in the community. The department’s licensing program sets safety standards for these houses to operate. Today, there are over 400 DDAP-licensed recovery houses.
- Over \$18 million was allocated to local SCAs for housing and case management in SFY 2025-26.
- \$8 million is being invested in expanded recovery support services from 2025-27, including peer support.
- \$2.4 million was allocated for regional recovery hubs in SFY 2025-26 to support organizations that work in partnership with recovery community leaders. This funding was intended to promote collaboration among community resources and providers, identify and address gaps in SUD services, and provide for workforce development and related trainings within nine statewide geographic regions.
- \$2.3 million in grant funding was allocated to five community-based organizations in SFY 2025-26 to improve access to licensed recovery housing for individuals with opioid use disorder and any co-occurring SUD or mental health condition. Additionally, organizations must provide individuals with access to case management and peer support services.

Harm Reduction: DDAP administers Pennsylvania’s Overdose Prevention Program (OPP), that provides the public with free opioid overdose reversal medication and drug testing strips designed to detect xylazine and fentanyl in the drug supply. In 2025, approximately 769,000 doses of naloxone and 737,000 testing strips were distributed across the state, while an estimated 11,400 overdoses were reversed. In 2025, DDAP was pleased to contribute over 48,000 doses of naloxone to Philadelphia’s Office of Public Safety and the Philadelphia Fire Department’s “Naloxone in Black” initiative aimed at raising awareness and saving lives among Philadelphia’s Black community. As a result of the Overdose Prevention Program’s robust efforts to increase naloxone access across the state, Pennsylvania ranked third in the nation for distributing more than 10,700 doses of naloxone on Save a Life Day in 2025.

Despite these achievements by the department, overdose deaths remain higher among the Commonwealth’s BIPOC communities than those that are White and non-Hispanic. Additionally,

overdose rates have been increasing steadily among adults aged 65 and older since 2012, with preliminary estimates indicating a 20 percent increase in overdose deaths among Pennsylvania’s older adults from 2022 to 2023. In response to these concerning trends, DDAP undertook several initiatives during SFY 2025-26 for two priority populations—Black men and adults aged 65 and older—to reduce stigma associated with SUD and increase access to treatment.

- The Wellness Initiative for Senior Education (WISE) program was created through a collaborative partnership between DDAP and the Department of Aging during SFY 2025-26. This state pilot will be implemented in SFY 2026-27 to address older adults’ wellness and raise awareness of SUD and overdose risks among adults 65 and older.
- DDAP has initiated two public awareness campaigns during SFY 2025-26 that target Black men and older adults with SUD.
 - The first of these initiatives is the Get Help Now media campaign, which raises awareness of SUD treatment access and other available supports.
 - The second initiative is an expanded anti-stigma campaign that has reached more than 245,000 BIPOC adults and 293,000 adults 65 and older.

As Attorney General, Governor Shapiro took on the pharmaceutical companies to hold them accountable for manufacturing the opioid crisis, securing over \$2 billion for Pennsylvania to help communities expand access to critical treatment, prevention, and support programs that benefit both those struggling with opioid use disorder and their families. To implement the settlement agreements, the Pennsylvania Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust disburses 70 percent of the Commonwealth’s share of those opioid settlement funds directly to counties, 15 percent directly to counties and other municipalities that filed their own lawsuits, and 15 percent to the Commonwealth (State Treasury) for annual appropriation by the General Assembly. I want to thank the Governor and members of the General Assembly for proposing and appropriating the state portion of this funding to DDAP. These funds have been used or allocated to support projects, including mobile outreach and recovery services in Kensington; expansion of SUD crisis services in communities; SUD drop-in/harm reduction services; workforce stabilization, retention, and recruitment, and SUD services and support for communities of color. The Governor’s budget proposes \$23.1 million in opioid settlement funds for the next fiscal year. Some of the initiatives that we plan to support with these funds are recovery housing supports for individuals with substance use disorder; community-based prevention services to prevent opioid use; workforce

recruitment/student fellowship pilot program; and integrated health collaborations between behavioral health and physical health care.

On behalf of the department and the Shapiro Administration, thank you for your time and service to the people of this great Commonwealth. I am committed to working with you to ensure that those affected by the disease of addiction have access to high quality services and supports where and when they need it.