



# Office of Addiction Services and Supports

**Testimony of Chinazo Cunningham, MD  
NYS OASAS Commissioner**

**Senate Standing Committee on  
Alcoholism and Substance Use Disorders**

October 10, 2025

Chair Fernandez, Senator Ramos, and distinguished colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on S.4547, the Treatment Court Expansion Act. While the Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) does not take an official position on pending legislation, we welcome the opportunity to discuss how the proposed legislation aligns with OASAS's mission and the work already underway across New York State under Governor Hochul's leadership to support individuals with substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders, particularly those who are justice-involved.

## **Overview of OASAS**

As you know, OASAS oversees one of the nation's largest systems of care for substance use disorder (SUD), prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery services. This system includes approximately 1,700 programs serving more than 730,000 individuals annually.

- OASAS directly operates 12 state-run Addiction Treatment Centers (ATCs).
- We certify all treatment facilities in New York State.
- We credential all professional substance use counselors and prevention practitioners statewide.

At the core of our mission is individualized care: recognizing that each person's path to recovery is different, offering multiple levels of care to meet those needs, and ensuring a full continuum of services—including access to safe, effective, and proven medication for addiction treatment (MAT).

Prevention is an equally critical component of this continuum. OASAS invests in school- and community-based prevention programs that equip young people and families with the skills to make healthy choices, strengthen protective factors, and reduce the risks associated with substance use. By addressing risk factors early, these efforts help lower future justice involvement and promote safer, healthier communities.

## **Addressing Substance Use Disorders Among Justice-Involved Individuals**

Substance use disorders are closely correlated with criminal activity, including drug-related theft, possession, impaired driving, domestic violence, and other offenses. SUDs remain one of the primary risk factors for criminal recidivism. Historically, the nation relied on incarceration to address substance use, creating a revolving door for individuals struggling with addiction.

Over the last several decades, New York has become a national leader in adopting new approaches that focus on treatment and rehabilitation rather than punishment. Roughly 31% of individuals enrolled in the OASAS-certified SUD treatment system have criminal justice involvement. Our [recent analysis](#) of justice involvement trends among those engaged in SUD treatment in the state indicate:

- Justice involvement among people in SUD treatment declined from 2018–2023, with the sharpest drop between 2019–2020
- Justice involvement was higher among males and those under 25
- Non-Hispanic white individuals saw larger declines in justice involvement than Black and Hispanic groups
- The greatest decrease in justice involvement was among those in cannabis-related treatment

In collaboration with our partners, we implemented a 2022 state law requiring MAT for alcohol and opioid use disorder in all 42 prisons and 58 jails in New York State—the largest implementation of its kind in a state carceral system in the United States. For context, program participants at state prisons increased by 7 times between 2022 and 2024.

These medications—methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone—reduce cravings, lower relapse rates, and significantly decrease the risk of overdose, particularly in the high-risk period immediately following release from incarceration. Individuals also receive peer supports, counseling services and discharge planning.

OASAS partnerships with the courts and criminal justice system also include:

- Drug Treatment Courts: We work closely with the 147 Drug Treatment Courts operating across the state. These courts combine intensive treatment with judicial monitoring, reducing recidivism, reducing substance use, improving employment outcomes, reuniting families, and lowering societal costs.
- Corrections and Community Supervision: OASAS oversees certain substance use treatment programs at Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) facilities, responds to MAT complaints, and works with the Commission of Correction on SUD services in county jails.
- Probation and Parole Collaboration: OASAS providers work directly with probation and parole officers to engage individuals in treatment and ensure continuity of care.
- Immediate Access Models: New models, including Crisis Stabilization Centers, specialized overdose prevention courts and police diversion initiatives, provide rapid access to treatment for opioid use disorder, often including MAT, as an alternative to criminal penalties.
- Education and Trainings: OASAS works with correctional staff, parole and probation officers, and facility medical providers at jails and prisons on best practices in support of those with SUD.

Many justice-involved individuals live with both substance use and mental health conditions, and OASAS works closely with the New York State Office of Mental Health to provide integrated, comprehensive care. This includes expanding access to Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs)—now totaling 39 statewide—that deliver person-centered, trauma-informed services regardless of ability to pay. Collaborative efforts also support 22 Crisis Stabilization Centers, workforce training, school-based clinics, housing, prevention, and outreach initiatives. Treatment incorporates universal screening, evidence-based interventions, and access to medications. All 12 state-operated Addiction Treatment Centers (ATCs) screen for suicide risk and mental health disorders, with psychiatric evaluations provided within 72 hours, and an ATC focused on individuals with severe mental illness further expanding care capacity.

## **Conclusion**

Across the state, OASAS-certified programs work in partnership with community organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and healthcare providers to make prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery supports accessible and effective. We remain committed to ensuring that no matter where a person is in their journey, the supports they need are available.

Recovery is not only about treatment—it is about rebuilding lives, restoring families, and strengthening communities. Prevention is a vital part of this continuum, ensuring that fewer New Yorkers ever reach the point of crisis or justice involvement by addressing risks early. Together, prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery services help individuals reconnect with loved ones, regain employment, and contribute to their communities—reducing isolation, lowering relapse risk, and creating healthier workplaces and schools.

Every person in recovery represents a success story with a ripple effect: reducing strain on emergency rooms, lowering justice system involvement, and supporting healthier communities across New York State.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony today. I look forward to our continued collaboration on behalf of New Yorkers impacted by substance use.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Chinazo Cunningham, M.D., M.S.

Commissioner, New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports