



**House Appropriations Committee  
Testimony on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2015-2016 DDAP Budget**

**Gary Tennis, Acting Secretary  
Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs  
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Good afternoon chairs and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee and staff. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs budget proposal for fiscal year 2015-16.

Before I get started, I would like to thank the General Assembly and the Wolf Administration for supporting our department, and to express my continued commitment to having this department succeed in fulfilling the mission for which it was created.

As you know, substance use disorder directly continues to impact one in four families in our commonwealth. Today, heroin and opioid addiction and overdose deaths have become our latest public health epidemic. In 2013, the Centers for Disease Control indicated 2,525 drug-induced overdose fatalities in Pennsylvania. We rank fourth in the nation for drug-induced overdose deaths, only behind California (4,747), Texas (2,606), and Florida (2,603). This translates into the stunning realization that in Pennsylvania we are currently losing at least seven (7) people a day to heroin addiction. Can you imagine any other public health epidemic taking that many of our citizens each day and still being undertreated?

But the stigma around addiction drug and alcohol addiction skews our response to this disease therefore adequate resources are often not allocated to provide sufficient treatment. Historically, in Pennsylvania, we have only had enough resources to effectively treat one out of every eight of our citizens who needs it.

Attempting to spread shrinking resources to address a growing need leads to more under treatment. Under treatment of drug and alcohol addiction, similar to the under treatment of any disease, has resulted in and will continue to result in poor outcomes. Over time, our average length of stay in treatment has reduced. This is problematic since length of stay in treatment is the number one predictor of positive outcomes.

But I believe that it is a new day in Pennsylvania. Governor Wolf's proposed fiscal year 2015-16 budget will help the department move towards its goal of reducing substance abuse through quality prevention, intervention and treatment programs.

Our department is proposing to use the increased funding to provide a wide array of services to address the current Heroin/Opioid Overdose crisis. DDAP is intending to address this crisis by improving intervention strategies, increasing the implementation of best practices, and increasing utilization of Medicaid, for eligible recipients, and private insurance funding to achieve better outcomes. We propose doing this through creating a competitive grant program for which our local single county drug and alcohol authorities (SCA's) can apply for funding.

Extrapolating from data available from certain county coroners, we are convinced heroin and other opioid abuse and overdoses in continuing to increase. To address the problem, the department worked closely with the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) and the District Attorneys Association to place prescription drop boxes throughout the state. This process was setup as a way for our citizens to safely dispose of any unused or unwanted prescription drugs. In the last year, we have collected more than 16,000 lbs. of prescription drugs.

We are also grateful for your efforts last year in passing the much needed Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which will be implemented by this summer. We are working with the Department of Health to support the implementation of the act, and to implement procedures so that those identified as drug seekers are referred to treatment. While these are great steps towards addressing the fight in reducing the prescription opioid problem, our department is also striving to implement other solutions to address the issue as well.

According to the CDC, healthcare providers wrote 259 million prescriptions for painkillers in 2012, enough for every American adult to have a bottle of pills. With the increase in funding, our department would also propose increasing best-practice training for physicians to improve pain prescribing and the referral to a clinical assessment and, if needed, proper treatment. We would also focus on training our behavioral health managed care organizations by implementing the use of our Pennsylvania Client Placement Criteria, statutory accountability, and cost effectiveness of funding treatment with clinical integrity.

A large part of our department's mission is to coordinate and lead the commonwealth's effort to reduce substance abuse addiction. We are working with the departments of Health, Human Services, State, Insurance, Transportation, Corrections, Labor and Industry, Community and Economic Development, as well as Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Substance Abuse touches on every agency in one way or another, and last year we coordinated a

plan to work together on projects to turnaround the steady increase in heroin and opioid addiction. When our department succeeds in its mission, most other departments also achieve greater success.

The Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs is a small agency with a huge task. We have only *begun* making strides towards a vision of a Pennsylvania where drug and alcohol addiction exists at a fraction of the level that it does today.

I would like to thank you for your continued support and commitment in helping us to stem the tide of the heroin/opioid crisis and carry out our mission of helping Pennsylvanians with drug and alcohol addiction get the treatment they need to live productive and successful lives. The Governor's proposed budget, with your support, is an important step forward, I believe it will strengthen the department's ability to stem the tide of the heroin and opioid crisis and take all Pennsylvanians toward a safer, healthier and brighter future.

Thank you.