



**Joint Legislative Budget Hearing
On Mental Hygiene**

**Testimony by:
Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez
NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse
Services**

**Hearing Room B, Legislative Office Building
Albany
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Good morning Senator DeFrancisco, Assemblyman Farrell, distinguished members of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees, Senator Klein and Assemblyman Cymbrowitz. My name is Arlene González-Sánchez, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services.

Let me begin by thanking you for your support to both OASAS and myself and for affording me the opportunity to present Governor Cuomo's 2012-13 Executive Budget as it pertains to OASAS.

Under Governor Cuomo's leadership, OASAS continues to be a strong advocate for the 2.5 million New Yorkers who struggle with an addiction. We remain committed to ensuring that all those individuals in need of services receive the quality of care they deserve. As such, OASAS, together with its programs and staff is an important and integral component of New York's comprehensive behavioral healthcare system.

The Executive Budget proposal allows us to maintain support for critical prevention, treatment and recovery services that are core to our system of care, provides funding for new or renovated beds, and continues to move forward with our capital program as planned.

The Governor's budget also supports significant and fundamental reforms that will strengthen the oversight of care provided to individuals in institutions and community residences. In the spirit of heeding the Governor's call to re-imagine state government, to perform more efficiently and to refocus agencies' operations to benefit recipients and taxpayers alike, OASAS is collaborating with other state agencies to maximize state resources.

More specifically, OASAS together with DOH and OMH is implementing a program that will allow providers who hold licenses from two or more of our agencies to operate under a single set of operating standards. The state agency providing the predominant services on site will act as the lead or host agency while the others will accept the oversight and monitoring of their sister state agency. Thus, a provider with licenses from OASAS, DOH, and OMH will receive oversight visits from one of us and not all three; thereby allowing our providers to spend more time providing direct care and be less burdened with administrative operations.

To ensure quality service improvement and achieve better client outcomes, OASAS will continue to measure the performance of our provider system through the statewide treatment Scorecards. Scorecards measure program quality, patient outcomes and cost efficiencies. The Scorecards are available on the OASAS website and are accessible to the public.

Also, in accordance with my priority of improving provider accountability and proactively identifying and addressing patient care issues, OASAS continues to implement the Enhanced Oversight and Monitoring Initiative (EOT). This agency-wide effort includes an ongoing review of all monitoring activities, with the goal of improving coordination of OASAS' oversight systems - both programmatic and fiscal.

Our goal is to ensure that patients receive treatment in a safe and therapeutic environment and that our providers protect the health and safety of their patients, staff and the communities where they deliver treatment.

One of the critical elements of helping individuals maintain their recovery from drug and alcohol addiction is stable housing. In an effort to address chronic homelessness and the needs of the New York City Homeless Families, OASAS recently announced awards to open 75 permanent supportive housing units in New York City, as part of the NYNY III initiative.

The Governor recognizes that all veterans should get the best care possible in return for the sacrifices they have made for our country. To that end, OASAS is aggressively working to double the number of residential beds available to serve our veterans. With approximately 125 beds already operating in New York State, projects to add another 75 beds are underway in the Capital District, Western New York, and North Country.

In addition, OASAS was awarded a five year, \$8.3 million federal grant to provide screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment (SBIRT) for substance use disorders. One of the target populations are the 100,000 service members, veterans and their families stationed at Fort Drum in the Watertown area. As a result of this grant, individuals will have the opportunity to receive screening and assessments to determine their appropriate level of care and address their substance misuse, before it progresses too far.

In closing, I have had the pleasure of visiting many programs within the communities you represent and I am committed to working with you to better serve your constituents.

I look forward to continue working with the Executive and Legislature to provide a premier system of prevention, treatment and recovery services that focuses on the unique needs of the people we serve.

With this, I conclude my testimony and welcome any questions you may have. Thank you.