



April 1, 2021

Dear Tennessee Legislator,

TAADAS has elected to have a virtual week on the hill this year to highlight our legislative priorities and advocacy efforts. You should have previously received a packet of information that includes a summary of TAADAS programs, a list of TAADAS members, a list of our advocacy goals and a briefing sheet of TAADAS legislative priorities. This week we want to highlight our support for TDMHSAS funding under Governor Bill Lee's proposed budget. We've attached a briefing sheet that reviews the funding proposals for TDMHSAS that are critical to the mission of that department.

TAADAS is also supporting a budget amendment that will be proposed to increase provider rates for TDMHSAS funded services. Substance Abuse providers in Tennessee are long overdue for a rate increase that supports the increased costs of providing services and supports the cost of hiring quality staff for these programs. The nature of the pandemic has resulted in many increases in requests for services including addiction treatment and the need to preserve and strengthen these programs is growing as well.

TAADAS members will be reaching out to schedule appointments with you to discuss these issues. I am available to discuss any of our advocacy efforts or the service delivery system in Tennessee at any time. I can be reached at 615-780-5901, x-118 or at marylinden@taadas.org. TAADAS also employs a Legislative Counsel, Nathan Ridley, who can be reached at 615-308-4354 or nridley@bradley.com. We appreciate your support for services for substance use treatment, prevention programs and recovery support services.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mary Linden Salter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Mary Linden Salter, LCSW
Executive Director

Funding for Substance Use Treatment



Tennessee Budget

TAADAS would like to thank Governor Bill Lee and the Tennessee General Assembly for continuing to support substance use treatment and prevention in the proposed FY2021-2022 budget. Funding the Creating Homes Initiative (CHI) to expand this proven housing model creates opportunities for Tennesseans diagnosed with mental illness and/or substance use disorder, with a focus on those individuals re-entering the community from the justice system. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that every \$1 invested in substance use treatment results in savings of \$4 for health systems and \$7 in criminal justice costs.¹ The additional funding for substance use treatment, recovery courts, and recovery housing in the proposed budget will improve health outcomes and economic wellbeing in Tennessee.

Reimbursement Rates

However, there are significant behavioral health provider shortages in almost every county in Tennessee,^{2,3} which ranks 43rd out of 50 states in access to behavioral health care.⁴ Insufficient reimbursement rates for behavioral health providers contribute to this problematic scarcity of services,³ and state-funded substance use organizations have only seen one meaningful rate increase in decades. This prevents providers from attracting and retaining a sufficient workforce to meet demand and to meet the increasing costs of other components of services. TAADAS urges lawmakers to increase reimbursement rates for state-funded substance use treatment providers in 2021.

Opioid Settlement Funds

In anticipation of settlement funds from a class-action lawsuit against major opioid manufacturers/distributors, TAADAS requests that state lawmakers strategically invest* these new funds to combat the opioid epidemic.⁵ TAADAS supports efforts to create a statewide opioid task force and believes that this task force would be the ideal entity to make recommendations for the appropriate use of any opioid settlement funds.

*A set of guiding principles for strategic investment of opioid settlement dollars developed by a coalition of 31 national associations can be found here: [Principles for the Use of Funds from the Opioid Litigation](#).

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2016). Facing addiction in America: The Surgeon General's report on alcohol, drugs, and health. Chapter 6. <https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/sites/default/files/chapter-6-health-care-systems.pdf>
2. Tennessee Department of Health (2019). Federal Shortage Areas. <https://www.tn.gov/health/health-program-areas/rural-health/federal-shortage-areas.html>
3. Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations (2019). All Hands on Deck: Tennessee's Mental Health Workforce Shortage. <https://www.tamho.org/uploads/All-hands-on-deck.pdf>
4. Mental Health America: 2021 Access to Care Data. <https://www.mhanational.org/issues/2021/mental-health-america-access-care-data>
5. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (2021). Coalition Releases Principles to Guide State and Local Spending of Forthcoming Opioid Litigation Settlement Funds. <https://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2021/coalition-releases-principles-to-guide-state-and-local-spending-of-forthcoming-opioid-litigation-settlement-funds.html>