

Advocacy Goals 2026



TAADAS supports the TDMHSAS budget proposal submitted to Governor Lee

TAADAS is thankful for the ongoing support of Governor Bill Lee and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) for our members, who are largely state-contracted treatment providers. TAADAS asks the General Assembly to fully fund TDMHSAS budget requests to address the current costs of providing treatment.

Addressing the overdose crisis

Tennessee has made substantial positive progress in addressing the overdose crisis as provisional data from the Tennessee Department of Health shows a 31% decrease in overdose deaths in 2024. We know that treatment works and that additional investment will contribute to improving our positive outcomes and provide additional cost savings for our state. For example, Kaiser Permanente in 2010 analyzed the average medical costs for 18 months pre- and post-substance use treatment and found that the substance use treatment group had a 35% reduction in inpatient costs, 39% reduction in emergency room costs, and a 26% reduction in total medical costs, compared with a matched control group. Investing in addiction treatment and recovery also reduces the costs of incarceration, family interventions, and sustenance support.

In her budget presentation, Commissioner Williams recognized the importance of continued support for these services, considering how greatly our nation's addiction epidemic affected Tennessee. Currently, 20,154 Tennesseans are served each year with this funding, and TDMHSAS estimates there are another 52,180 people who need services annually.

Providing access to treatment

The Commissioner's Fiscal Year 2026-27 request for \$14,550,100 to support substance use treatment access is needed to continue to bridge the gap in funding for the uninsured. This gap is increasing with shifts in federal funding. TAADAS supports this request as we continue to address the impact of substance use, including overdose risk and death. Providing treatment in response to a recent overdose can help people find hope and invest in their recovery in response to that crisis.

Building the behavioral health workforce

The Tennessee General Assembly funded the Pathways Behavioral Health Scholarship program through TDMHSAS during the fall 2023 special session. The scholarship funds master's degree students in behavioral health attending Tennessee universities. These students then work in a TDMHSAS-funded program, ensuring their exposure to these programs and supporting staff recruitment and retention. After only two months, TAADAS and TAMHO closed applications due to the volume of requests. Commissioner Williams proposes \$4,437,800 to fund students beyond the original FY 25 end date to provide additional opportunities for new applicants.

TAADAS is also one of two entities funded by TDMHSAS to provide the scholarships. We have a significant shortage of behavioral health professionals at a time when overdose and resulting death rates continue at epidemic levels in our state. This scholarship will help us build the workforce needed to provide those services. Commissioner Williams' request for \$1,775,100 to fund the scholarships is in response to the overwhelming number of requests for support from master's program students preparing to serve persons in state-funded addiction programs. Each time we've opened the application portal, the response has been overwhelming.