



SENATE DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE
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Testimony of
JENNIFER SMITH, SECRETARY

Thank you, Chairman Muth and members of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee for the opportunity to speak on the Wolf Administration's efforts to strengthen Pennsylvania's recovery support services for individuals in recovery from substance use disorder (SUD).

An individual's road to recovery from SUD is often marked with setbacks. The reoccurrence of symptoms for an individual with SUD is not a reflection of a person's strength or willpower. It is a sign that individuals need treatment and recovery supports to help them through their time of struggle and continued supports are even more critical as an individual navigates their way through life in recovery.

Supporting Pennsylvanians in Recovery

The Wolf Administration is dedicated to ensuring that Pennsylvanians are supported through all phases of their recovery journey. Drug and alcohol recovery houses provide safe, family-like substance-free living environments to support individuals in recovery from SUD and are an incredible recovery tool for those in need of housing and peer camaraderie. While recovery houses often vary in structure, all are centered on peer support and a connection to services that promote long-term recovery.

Beginning in 2014, in response to concerns about already vulnerable individuals living in substandard recovery houses, DDAP convened the Certified Drug and Alcohol Recovery Housing Taskforce. After the taskforce submitted its recommendations, the General Assembly passed legislation to require the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) to license recovery houses that receive funds or referrals from public sources. DDAP developed these regulations based on legislative requirements and extensive public input.

Timeline of Recovery House Licensure in Pennsylvania

From 2014-2016, a taskforce made of up individuals in recovery, law enforcement, treatment providers, recovery housing operators, county and state drug and alcohol agencies, and advocacy and recovery-support groups were charged with developing and submitting recommendations to DDAP on the certification of drug and alcohol recovery houses.

The Certified Drug and Alcohol Recovery Housing Taskforce recommended that DDAP consider developing recovery housing standards that incorporate protections under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, address health and safety of residents, create a complaint and investigation process, address discriminatory practices, and create requirements for recovery house owners and operators. DDAP's final regulations incorporated 86% of the physical plant recommendations directly from the taskforce's final report.

In 2017, Governor Wolf signed Senate Bill 446 into law as Act 59, which gave DDAP the statutory authority to license drug and alcohol recovery houses that receive referrals from state agencies or state-funded facilities or receive federal or state funding.

Over the next year and a half, DDAP worked to draft regulations to strengthen Pennsylvania's recovery environment by creating a licensure process for recovery homes. While Act 59 did not

require a public comment period through the final-omitted regulatory process, DDAP believed that input from individuals in recovery and stakeholders was of utmost importance. In May of 2019, DDAP opened a 30-day window for stakeholders, advocates, and interested parties to view the draft regulations and submit public comment.

DDAP continued to receive, respond to, and incorporate input from stakeholders, the Independent Regulatory Review Commission, and the Office of Attorney General throughout the regulatory process. The final-omitted regulations were unanimously approved on October 21, 2021. On December 11, 2021, the regulations were published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin and the department [announced](#) that the licensure process for recovery houses is now open and accepting applications.

Recovery House Licensing Status

As of January 18, 2022, DDAP has received seven recovery house licensing applications and 23 applications are currently in the process of completion through the online application portal.

The effective date for DDAP to begin issuing fines against unlicensed homes that accept public funds or referrals is 180 days after publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin, which is June 9, 2022. Per Act 59, DDAP will publicize a list of licensed recovery houses, as is done with licensed drug and alcohol facilities, in the coming months on DDAP’s website.

Recovery House Resident Protections

The final-omitted recovery house regulations contain several provisions designed to protect residents in the areas of health and safety, finances, resident rights, and promote SUD treatment.

	Resident Protection	Regulation
Health and safety	Staff are trained in CPR, first aid, naloxone, communicable diseases, fire prevention, and emergency preparedness within 90 days of hire	28 Pa. Code § 717.18(c)
	Collection of relevant resident medical information, drug and alcohol history, medical contact information, and emergency contact information at beginning of residency	28 Pa. Code § 717.22(b)(3)
	Naloxone required on premises	28 Pa. Code § 717.24(4)
	Notification of emergency contact as result of resident hospitalization, death, or not returning within 12 hours of expected time	28 Pa. Code § 717.27
	Physical plant standards require clean/sanitary environment and proper heating/cooling	28 Pa. Code § 717.29

	Requirement for safety/evacuation procedures, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers each floor	28 Pa. Code § 717.30
Protection of other residents	Prohibition on staff/volunteers providing alcohol/drugs to residents	28 Pa. Code § 717.17(b)(5)
	PSP criminal history check for all staff/volunteers before starting work	28 Pa. Code § 717.17(b)(7)
Promoting SUD treatment	Resident may attend treatment facility of their choice; licensee may not require or prohibit a resident from attending a specific facility	28 Pa. Code § 717.19(a)(6)
Resident rights	Licensee cannot discriminate based on age, sex, race, ethnicity, religion, economic status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression	28 Pa. Code § 717.19(a)(2)
	Residents have right to inspect, correct, and dispute information in their records	28 Pa. Code § 717.19(a)(3)-(5)
Financial protection	Licensee must document all financial transactions with resident and establish a written agreement before assisting in any management of resident funds	28 Pa. Code § 717.25(a) 28 Pa. Code § 717.25(e)
	Prohibition against staff/volunteers from requiring a resident to relinquish public assistance benefits, surrender cash, borrowing/lending money to other residents, buying or selling property to/from a resident, soliciting anything of monetary value other than rent at time of residency	28 Pa. Code § 717.25(b)
	Residents maintain right to manage their own personal finances	28 Pa. Code § 717.25(c)
	Licensees may assist a resident in managing their finances, budgeting, and spending with protections described in 28 Pa. Code § 717.25(d)	28 Pa. Code § 717.25(d)
Complaints / unusual incidents	Licensees must implement policies/procedures for complaint management and unusual incident reporting	28 Pa. Code § 717.26 28 Pa. Code § 717.31
Licensing	DDAP will revoke or refuse license due to gross incompetence, negligence, mistreating or abusing residents	28 Pa. Code § 717.12(a)(4) and § 717.12(a)(8)

Funding Assistance for Regulatory Compliance

Through funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Pennsylvania is eligible for \$1.2 million through the SUPPORT Act during the first year, with potential for additional funding up to five years. With this funding, DDAP anticipates being able to assist approximately 25 recovery house owners during this first year to make health and safety-related renovations to bring houses into compliance with licensing regulations.

Strengthening Pennsylvania's Recovery Support Services

In addition to the establishment of the recovery house licensure process, over the last few years, the Wolf Administration has awarded more than \$34 million in federal grants to Recovery Community Organizations to establish and expand community, family, and employment recovery support services for individuals in recovery from SUD. These grants include funding for recovery coaching through Certified Recovery Specialists (CRS) and Certified Family Recovery Specialists (CFRS), telephonic supports, education services including GED attainment, employment services including job coaching and resume writing, general life-support activities, substance-free social activities, and family support services including family meetings and psychoeducation groups.

In addition, Single County Authorities (SCA) have spent nearly \$58 million in the last five years for recovery support services which were allocated to more than 102 providers in their respective counties. These services complement the focus of treatment, outreach, engagement, and other strategies and interventions to assist people in recovery in gaining the skills and resources needed to initiate, maintain, and sustain long-term recovery.

DDAP will continue to expand its commitment to empower sustained recovery for all Pennsylvanians and expects more opportunities to support Pennsylvania's recovery environment in light of the increased federal focus on recovery support services.

Recovery Rising Initiative

In January 2021, DDAP launched a stakeholder-led initiative called [Recovery Rising](#) to foster a resilient, diverse, and accessible recovery environment in Pennsylvania. During Phase One of this initiative, from April to July of 2021, Recovery Rising hosted four regional stakeholder meetings with a total of 181 attendees and a statewide convening with 128 attendees all representing an extensive range of supports for and pathways to recovery.

From these convenings, an Advisory Commission of influencers – spanning peer, clinical, family and community roles – prioritized eight key areas on which the commonwealth should focus to embed and expand recovery support services throughout the state. These key areas are as follows:

1. Create Equitable, Sustainable, and Flexible Funding for Recovery Supports
2. Build the Capacity and Expand the Role of Recovery Community Organizations
3. Commit to Ensure Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
4. Make Person-centered and Recovery-oriented Care the Norm
5. Provide the Critical Recovery Support Services Needed in Pennsylvania
6. Improve Access in Rural Areas
7. Provide Education and Training to Reduce Stigma and Equip People to Support All Pathways to Recovery
8. Build the State-level Infrastructure to Support Recovery

During Phase Two, the main priorities of the initiative include exploring appropriate ways for building capacity to support recovery work, facilitating dialogue and strategic planning around the best model for a statewide or regional recovery community organizations, and assessing racial equity for recovery support services in Pennsylvania to determine need and help the state design better policies and issue equity-based funding opportunities. In the near future, DDAP will be once again engaging stakeholders on strategies to realize these goals.

Life Unites Us Campaign

Life Unites Us launched in September 2020 and is an evidence-based approach to reducing the stigma of substance use disorder by sharing real-life experiences of individuals in recovery and their loved ones. In the first 12 months of the campaign, nearly four million Pennsylvanians were reached with information and messaging to encourage stigma reduction. More than 200 individuals in recovery, as well as their family members, recorded testimonials that were shared on the campaign's website and social media channels. In addition, the campaign hosted 12 webinars across numerous topics related to stigma reduction with more than 1,200 attendees.

A survey of Pennsylvanians conducted one year after campaign launch found several trends, including greater willingness to live with someone and continue a relationship with a friend struggling with opioid use disorder. Pennsylvanians also indicated higher willingness to provide naloxone to friends and family of people with OUD, and openness to having opioid treatment centers located near their homes.

Throughout year two, Life Unites Us will expand to address stigma related to stimulants and polysubstance use, issues which are on the rise in Pennsylvania and nationally. We look forward to our continued partnership with Penn State Harrisburg's Douglas W. Pollock Center for Addiction Outreach and Research, The Public Good Projects, and Shatterproof to combat the stigma which too often acts as a barrier for individuals living with the disease of addiction and those seeking life in recovery.

On behalf of the Wolf Administration, thank you again for this opportunity. We are committed to continuing to work with you and all members of the General Assembly to address the ongoing addiction crisis and strengthen drug and alcohol services and supports to all individuals across the commonwealth.