

Statement to the Medicaid Commission

On Behalf
Of

The National Consortium of TASC Programs

Statement on Improving Case Management,
Public Health and Public Safety
on Behalf of Individuals
who are Involved in the Criminal Justice System

July 11, 2006
Washington D.C.

Submitted by
Mary K. Shilton
Director
National Consortium of TASC Programs Inc.
2204 Mount Vernon Avenue
Suite 200
Alexandria VA 22301
703-836-8272 phone
703-836-8271 fax
nationaltasc@nationaltasc.org

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The National Consortium of TASC Programs Inc,¹ is pleased to have the opportunity to make this statement in support of persons who are or have been under criminal justice supervision. Access to Medicaid is an important public health issue for individuals who are incarcerated as well as those under supervision in our communities. The adequacy of medical care, screening, assessment and case management for these persons affects every neighborhood in our nation. On behalf of the Board of National TASC, we make the following recommendations to improve the Medicaid program so that it meets the public health crisis more effectively with respect to these individuals.

National TASC hopes that the Medicaid Commission will take a leadership role in helping to develop a method for providing Medicaid to persons who are imprisoned as well as those who are under criminal justice supervision but living in their communities. There are nearly 8 million persons in jail or under community supervision each year who are in need of proper health care services in our communities. An estimated two thirds of these persons are in need of mental health, substance abuse and infectious disease treatment but lack adequate health coverage for appropriate care.

National TASC joins with a large number of organizations supporting the policy recommendations to ensure proper health care services for persons while incarcerated and during the critical reentry period. We offer the following suggestions.

- Revision of Medicaid rules to allow correctional facilities to receive Medicaid funding to help cover the costs of providing health care to eligible prisoners;
- Ensure that benefits are available to ex-offenders immediately upon release; and
- Encourage states to provide addiction treatment services that are fully integrated with the individual's health care needs.

¹ National TASC (Treatment Accountability for Safer Communities) is a membership association representing over 200 programs across the United States that are dedicated to the professional delivery of assessment and case management services to substance involved criminal justice and court populations. TASC is represented heavily in some states such as Florida, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Arizona and Colorado. In addition to being an effective program model, TASC has also distilled a methodology of critical elements which are fundamental to integrating the criminal justice and substance abuse treatment systems, holding offenders and both systems accountable through the implementation of client-specific case management. As such, TASC methods can be utilized by programs or systems attempting to manage drug-involved offenders and other people involved with the courts as they occupy places in both justice and treatment programming.

- Include screening, case management and assessment of individual needs as a reimbursable cost to ensure that justice involved persons do not fall through the cracks in the system and recidivate or pose increased public health risk to our communities.
- Federal Medicaid guidelines should be strengthened to require that states provide the addiction and other healthcare services necessary to help people succeed in the community after a period of incarceration. This would include substance abuse counselors, TASC case managers, and social workers as well as rehabilitation
- Such addiction treatment services should be fully integrated with the person's primary health care needs.
- States should be encouraged to apply for waivers to implement projects that waive the IMD exclusion from the original Medicaid law, which excludes community residential substance abuse treatment from reimbursement and denies those citizens most at risk or relapse and reincarceration the care they need.

On behalf of the National Consortium of TASC Programs Inc. we offer our support for your work and hope that you will consider our recommendations. Please note that our staff will be willing to provide additional information on these points.