

I'm Jennifer Smith, and since January 2017 I have served as the acting secretary for the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP). I joined DDAP in 2015 as the department's deputy secretary.

Prior to DDAP, I spent 11 years in the Office of the Budget (OB) in various roles, eventually becoming the office's Director of Planning and Management in 2012. I value my time spent in OB and learned a great deal about public service, but I felt a strong call to do more. I wanted a role where my service could directly impact vulnerable populations. After interviewing to be DDAP's deputy secretary, I felt confident that this department would be an opportunity to make a tangible positive impact on communities around Pennsylvania.

If confirmed as secretary, I would like to continue the progress we've made to address the foundational issues that affect both my department and the drug and alcohol treatment landscape at-large. I also look forward to continued collaborations across the health and human services agencies with a shared vision of easily accessible, client-focused services.

As acting secretary, I have had the opportunity to oversee the implementation of several critical projects that will lay the foundation for a more effective treatment system. For example, a key component to strengthening our system of care is equipping our providers with a diverse array of tools so they are able to tailor treatment to patients' needs. We are using the 21st Century Cures Act federal grant funding to expand access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT), improve the warm handoff process, and increase the use of other evidence-based treatment practices like motivational interviewing and family-oriented therapy. Obtaining and utilizing Pennsylvania's 21st Century Cures Act funding was a collaborative effort by my department and the departments of Health, Human Services, Aging, and Insurance. I am committed to ensuring that our treatment system is accessible and easily navigated, as well as ensuring that the drug and alcohol workforce is engaged and properly equipped to address the challenges they face working in this field, and I know my colleagues share the same vision.

Collaboration among the other Health and Human Services agencies is critical as we fight the opioid epidemic. We cannot go at this independently – our initiatives must be coordinated so we can assist each other and strengthen our efforts. I feel that our four agencies and our leadership teams work very closely and well together, and I am proud of the partnerships my staff and I have established with our counterparts at the departments of Aging, Health, Human Services, and Insurance.

We expanded the number of agencies regularly engaged in this partnership when Governor Wolf's signed an opioid disaster declaration in January. Under this disaster declaration, representatives from the departments of Drug and Alcohol Programs, Health, Human Services, Aging, Insurance, Corrections, and State, as well as the Pennsylvania State Police, and Commission on Crime and Delinquency meet weekly to discuss initiatives tied to the governor's declaration, trends we're seeing related to the opioid epidemic, and how the state can continue to improve its response to the opioid epidemic. The disaster declaration permits agencies to waive barriers to treatment, allowing DDAP to streamline patient admissions and licensing procedures that cut into staff time with patients. We continue to look for ways to engage additional agencies and stakeholders that can play a role in this unified fight, and I am confident that these partnerships will continue and grow regardless of the presence of an official declaration. If confirmed, I look forward to engaging with the General Assembly to help Pennsylvanians affected by the disease of addiction.

The foundational issues being addressed under my direction are not limited to the provider landscape as might traditionally be associated with DDAP. We continue to face challenges as a

relatively new department and because we are small, normal turnover and vacancies may be more noticeable than in a larger agency. I am actively working to ensure all vacancies are filled, and I am proud of the work my staff has done to ensure that work does not get lost in staff vacancies. I'm also extremely proud of their dedication to helping the populations we serve. Through the transition to a new placement criteria and our on-going transition to a new data system, we are making more resources and information available to providers in the field and to Pennsylvanians around the commonwealth.

If confirmed, I will continue the work started during my time as acting secretary to ensure that Pennsylvania's drug and alcohol treatment landscape always puts the patient first. If we are going to overcome this epidemic, we must ensure that individuals with a substance use disorder have access to high quality treatment that meets their individualized needs. There is no one-size-fits-all treatment, and I will use my time as secretary to strengthen our treatment landscape so that recovery can be a reality for many more Pennsylvanians.

Again, I thank you for your time and consideration, and I look forward to working with you all moving forward.