



ASAM
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Innovations in Addiction Medicine and Science
April 24-27, 2025 | Denver, CO

The Tennessee Example: Capitol Creeping & Advanced Advocacy Tips



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Disclosure Information

Chad Elkin, MD, DFASAM

- *No relevant disclosures*

Session Learning Objectives

- 01 | Examine TNSAM's advocacy efforts and the applicable lessons on securing legislative sponsors and engaging with legislators effectively
- 02 | Develop skills to draft effective bills, enhance their likelihood of passing, and the creation of a one-pager
- 03 | Identify necessary logistical steps and best practices for delivering witness testimony

TN State Limits on Buprenorphine Dosage / Prescriptive Authority

- Tennessee law forbids physician assistants, nurse practitioners from prescribing more than 16 mg of buprenorphine/day or from prescribing monoproduct buprenorphine under any circumstances¹
- TN law forbids physician assistants, nurse practitioners from prescribing benzodiazepines to MAT patients under any circumstances²
- TennCare only permits insurance coverage of up to 16 mg of buprenorphine/day³

TNSAM Sponsored Legislation

- MOUD Initiation by Telehealth (HB1049/SB1208): would codify that an in-person examination would not be required to initiate MOUD.⁴
- Beneficial for patients without reliable transportation, mobility issues, or who live in rural areas.

TNSAM Sponsored Legislation (Cont.)

- Correctional Facility Prescribing (HB1239/SB421): would allow mid-level providers to prescribe buprenorphine in TN correctional facilities.⁵
- Forced opioid withdrawal is associated with elevated post-release overdose risk among individuals with OUD⁶ and Incarcerated individuals are 129 times more likely to die of an overdose within two weeks of their release.⁷
- Alcohol Good Samaritan (HB995/SB940): expands immunity when assisting a person experiencing overdose from alcohol.⁸

TNSAM Feedback to TDMHSAS

- **Letter to TDMHSAS on New OBOT/OTP Rules⁹**
 - Requested reconsideration of dosing standards for buprenorphine in the age of high potency synthetic opioids and dosing caps for methadone in OTPs
 - Urged removal of the requirement that recipients under 18 yo must have 2 documented unsuccessful attempts at short-term withdrawal management prior to initiating treatment

TNSAM Feedback to Medicaid MCOs

- Collaborating with TN Medicaid Payors for Optimal Alignment
 - TN MCOs individually do not consistently follow the same standards
 - Ex: Some would require a connected counseling visit to be same day vs others would require within 7 days of the provider encounter to be “connected” to the provider encounter. All MCOs are now moving to within 7 days.

Foundations of Effective Advocacy

• Learn the Ropes

- Team up with a Lobbyist
- Connect with your state AMA chapter
- Supporting or Opposing a Bill

• Networking

- Start to connect with your state legislators prior to session starting.
- Connect or Join other state non-profits or medical associations involved in advocacy

• Deadlines

- State Filing Deadlines for Bills
- When Legislature is in session
- Learn to Use Your State's Capitol Website



Securing a Sponsor

- **When To Find A Sponsor**

- Sooner the better
- Ideally prior to December
- Need House and Senate Sponsor

- **Who To Target as a Sponsor**

- Party in power
- Health Committee members
- Leader/Chairman of Committee
- Majority Party Leaders

- **How To Find a Sponsor**

- State AMA chapter events
- Dr of the Day



Crafting Your Bill

- **What Type of Bill**

- Regular Bill
- Caption Bill

- **Are There Bill Limits in Your State**

- TN House Members have 10 bill limit
- TN Senators have no limit
- Health Committee members

- **How to Draft Your Bill**

- Draft it yourself
- Seek help from your sponsor's LA
- Get Legal to edit



Develop Your “One Pager”

- **Purpose of One-Pager**

- Short Summary of What the Bill Does
- Encapsulates Talking Points
- Persuades Members to Support

- **Information to Include**

- House and Senate Bill Numbers
- Sponsors' Names
- Bill Summary and Impact
- Supporting Organizations
- Your Name and Contact Information



Bill Success Strategies

- **Identify Potential Opposition**

- Competitors
- State Agencies
- Non-profits

- **Get Organizations to Sign-On**

- State AMA Chapter
- State Hospital Association
- Addiction or MH Non-Profits
- State Dept of Mental Health



Mastering Legislative Meetings

- **Get to Know Legislative Assistants (LA)**
- **Schedule Appointment In-Person with Legislative Assistant**
- **When to Schedule Meetings**
- **Leave Your One-Pager**
- **What to Talk About**
 - Gauge Support Prior to Meeting
 - Research their Prior Bills
 - Mention Bill Number
 - Ask about their questions or concerns
 - Make the Ask
 - Thank them for their time



Brock Martin
Chair

Suite #: 123
Appointment Time: 9am Monday
Concerns:
Prior Bills:
Strategy of What To Talk About:
Supports/Opposes:

Committee Members



Ron M. Gant



Tim Hicks



Timothy Hill



Tom Leatherwood



Sam McKenzie



Bo Mitchell



Bryan Terry



Ryan Williams



Engaging Legislators Without An Appointment

- **“Loitering”**

- Hang Out in their Office
- Good LA Relationship Helps
- Be Patient

- **“Stalking”**

- Hallway
- Food Court
- Be Brief

**The terms “Loitering” and “Stalking” are used in jest in reference to advocacy engagement strategies and do not endorse any illegal activities.*



Witness Testimony Tips

- **Required Forms**

- Get on the list to testify
- Email the LA of the Chairman

- **Time Limit**

- Find out how many minutes you have for your statement – DO NOT GO OVER
- Usually 2-3 minutes
- No time limit for member questions

- **What to Say**

- Thank Chairman and Committee
- Encourage Support
- Answer Questions



COMMERCE AND LABOR COMMITTEE

REGULAR CALENDAR

Steps To Pass A Bill

HOUSE

House Passes 1st and 2nd
Considerations (Readings with No
Objections)



COMMITTEE
(Majority Approve)



CALENDAR COMMITTEE
(Debates Merits of Bill - IF Bill will reach
floor)



FLOOR DEBATE
(3rd Consideration & Amends. Majority (50)
Approve)



SENATE

Senate Passes 1st and 2nd
Considerations (Readings with No
Objections)



COMMITTEE
(Majority Approve)



CALENDAR COMMITTEE
(Determines WHEN Bill will reach floor)



FLOOR DEBATE
(3rd Consideration & Amends. Majority (17)
Approve)



Bill Introduced to
House and Senate



SPEAKERS
(House/Senate Speakers Sign)

GOVERNOR
(Signs, Vetoes, or Allows w/o
Signature)

PUBLIC CHAPTER NUMBER
(Sec of State assigns Chapter Number)

TN PUBLIC ACTS
(Sec of State Files New Act)

TN CODE ANNOTATED
(TN Code Commission converts new law into
existing code)

Final Takeaways

- **It's a Time-Consuming Process**
 - Will require multiple days off from work each week your bill is up for a vote
 - Legislature is very busy while in session and can be exhausting
- **Have Realistic Expectations**
 - Most bills die in committee
 - Your first bill is unlikely to pass
 - Don't get discouraged.
 - Learn from the experience
- **Gratitude for Sponsors**
 - Thank them
 - Send hand-written thank-you notes



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