

Recommendations to the Governor

On the Position of OSA in Restructuring of the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services and the Department of Human Services
Governor's Substance Abuse Services Commission

August 13, 2003

Executive Summary

The impact of Maine's alcoholism and drug abuse problem extends far beyond health problems. The economic cost of substance abuse in Maine has been estimated to be **one billion** dollars per year. The relationship between the cost of the criminal justice system and substance abuse is tremendous. Pharmacies and homes are frequently being broken into in an attempt to obtain prescription drugs. Businesses are leaving some parts of the state because they cannot find a stable work force due to the high incidence of substance abuse. Enjoyment of Maine's recreational resources is tainted by the misuse of alcohol and drugs while boating Maine's rivers, lakes and coast and while enjoying snowmobile and ATV trails. The public safety of Maine's citizens is at risk.

Prevention activities often involve the issue of availability of alcohol and drugs, especially to underage citizens. Substance abuse prevention is now a law enforcement issue, dealing with the availability of illegal alcohol and drugs to minors.

The sky rocketing cost of health care is directly tied to the misuse of alcohol and drugs. The majority of emergency room admissions are alcohol and drug related. Maine has experienced an unprecedented rash of accidental drug overdose deaths over the past year. Maine's increase in the Corrections budget is directly related to the escalation of criminal activity perpetrated by drug seeking individuals.

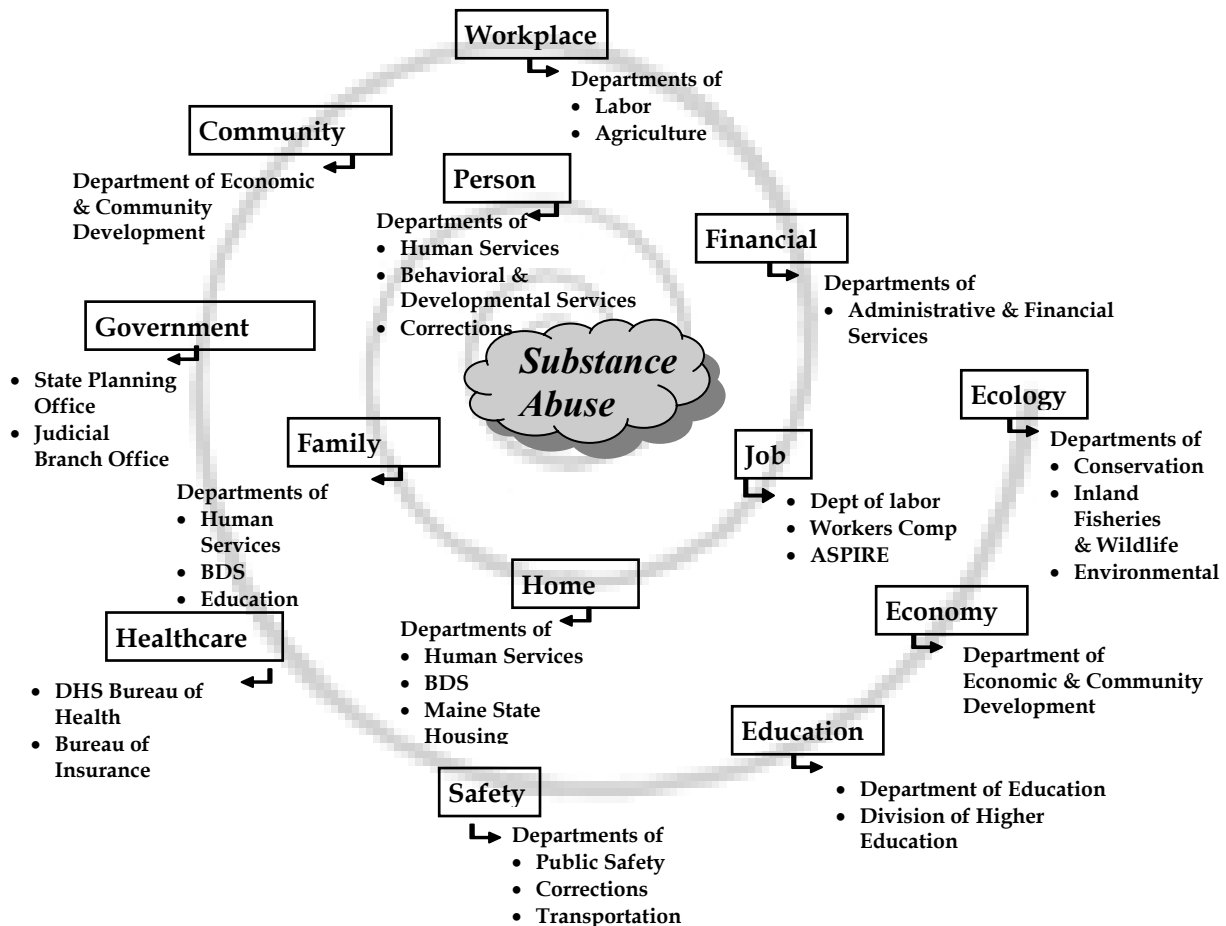
For nearly the past ten years the Office of Substance Abuse has served its constituents and state government as a model of a responsive, competent, credible, collaborative and successful organization concerned with quality, efficiency, and outcomes. Since almost every department within Maine state government deals with the direct and indirect effects of abuse of or addiction to alcohol and drugs, the Substance Abuse Services Commission makes the following recommendations:

- Keep all of the functions of the Office of Substance Abuse intact and locate it as a cabinet level position within the Office of the Governor
- Increase the visibility, composition, role and responsibility of the Substance Abuse Services Commission as the policy oversight body for the Governor and OSA.
- Add responsibility to the Office for the licensing of substance abuse counselors and programs

Maine's success in controlling the cost and extent of the problems of substance abuse are dependent on an interdepartmental approach to the problem, lead by a committed Governor and implemented by an elevated and recognized single state authority.

*The Spiraling Impact of Alcohol and Substance Abuse
on the Social and Economic Wellbeing of Maine*

Impact on Executive Branch Departments:
A case for placing the Office of Substance Abuse in the Governor's Office.



Annual Cost of Substance Abuse in Maine 1.2+ Billion Dollars*

* The largest hidden tax: Substance Abuse in Maine Task Force on Substance Abuse Report- November, 1998