

Pharmacotherapies for Alcohol and Substance Use Disorders Alliance (PASA)
Study Research Planning Program (SRPP)
***Drug Discovery* Award Application**
Request for Application (RFA) #8c
Release: March 18, 2026

SUBMISSION AND REVIEW DATES

• Pre-application Due	04/15/2026
• Go/ No Go Response from PASA Management Core (for submission of full applications)	04/24/2026
• Full Application Due	06/17/2026
• Peer Review Process Ends	July 2026
• Consortium Steering Committee Review	Mid-August 2026
• Notification of Award Recommendations	August 2026
• Award Negotiations Begin	September 2026

Request for Application (RFA) #8c: Drug Discovery Synopsis

Study implementation awards for proof-of-principle nonclinical (drug discovery) research to determine which compounds are most appropriate for human research trials. Separate RFAs are available for pre-clinical animal research studies and planning awards for human participant clinical trials.

Additional details and associated templates for this RFA are available at:
<https://pasa-research.org/funding-opportunities>

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I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Introduction and Intent of Award Mechanism

The Pharmacotherapies for Alcohol and Substance Use Disorders Alliance (PASA) is funded by the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) (<https://cdmrp.health.mil/>) through the Alcohol and Substance Use Disorders Research Program (ASUDRP) consortium awards (W81XWH-15-2-0077, W81XWH-18-2-0044, W81XWH-22-2-0081, and HT94252520002). The PASA's goal is to fund study applications that explore integrated approaches to address ASUD especially comorbid ASUD with, particularly but not limited to PTSD and other mental health conditions and reduce the number of opioid and other substance use-related deaths through multidisciplinary, team-based research efforts that translate knowledge into enhanced clinical pharmacological treatment protocols and enhanced quality of life for Service Members, Veterans, and the American public. These medications will ideally address the comorbidity between PTSD, TBI, or other mental health conditions because these comorbidities are common in the military and veteran populations. Alcohol use disorder (AUD) is the most common ASUD in these populations, but opiate use disorder (OUD) also has developed significant clinical importance because of prolonged pain treatments with opiates. Commercialization linked to FDA approval for these new medications or combinations of medications is critical so that early linkages to pharmaceutical companies are considered strengths of any application for PASA funding.

The PASA SRPP is requesting applications for nonclinical (drug discovery) research to determine compounds to be used for treatment of ASUD (meaning AUD, SUD or combined ASUD), particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD or other mental health conditions most appropriate for future human research trials leading to enhanced quality of life for Service Members, Veterans, and the American public. Separate RFAs are available for pre-clinical animal research studies and planning awards for human participant clinical trials.

B. Program Description

The PASA is administered by a PASA Management Core led by RTI International in collaboration with the Baylor College of Medicine (BCM). The PASA Leadership team consists of Principal Investigator Ryan Whitworth, PhD from RTI International and co-Principal Investigator Tom Kosten, MD, from Baylor College of Medicine (BCM). Oversight of PASA is provided by a Consortium Steering Committee assembled by the CDMRP ASUDRP.

The goal of the PASA is to fund study applications for developing new medications that can be brought to therapeutic use to improve treatment outcomes for ASUD, especially as related to PTSD and ideally address the comorbidity between ASUDs and other mental health conditions.

C. PASA Management Core

The PASA Management Core is responsible for soliciting and prioritizing applications. Successful applications will be recommended for funding by the Consortium Steering Committee assembled by the CDMRP ASUDRP. The PASA Management Core will provide oversight and coordination for future proof-of-principle drug discovery research studies, receive all relevant study data in a timely manner and act as a data repository, and provide analytic support in study design and analyses.

The PASA Management Core will provide the administrative, protocol development and review, regulatory, statistical, resource, and data management/storage functions necessary to facilitate rapid development of research that would perhaps not otherwise be feasible without the PASA Management Core. The PASA Management Core contains multidisciplinary expertise and experience in support of

ASUD research. Additional information about PASA is available on its website (<https://pasa-research.org>).

II. Research Goals and Focus

A. Strategic Goals

The ASUDRP has three strategic goals:

- i. Goal 1 (Discover): Identify new chemical entities and repurpose existing medications in **pre-clinical and nonclinical (e.g. drug discovery) research models**, including Investigational New Drug (IND)-enabling studies, for the treatment of ASUD with co-occurring PTSD, and other mental health conditions.
- ii. Goal 2 (Phase 1 First-in-Human Safety): Evaluate candidate medications, including the assessment of **safety, pharmacokinetics (PK), and pharmacodynamics (PD)**, to determine optimal dosing in individuals with ASUD, or ASUD with co-occurring PTSD and other mental health conditions, or as needed, healthy volunteers.
- iii. Goal 3 (Phase 2 Efficacy): Advance potential treatments by testing the **preliminary efficacy and safety** of medications or medication combinations in individuals with ASUD, or ASUD with co-occurring PTSD and other mental health conditions; and by exploring **precision medicine tools** for improved treatment outcomes for individual patients.

B. Focus Areas

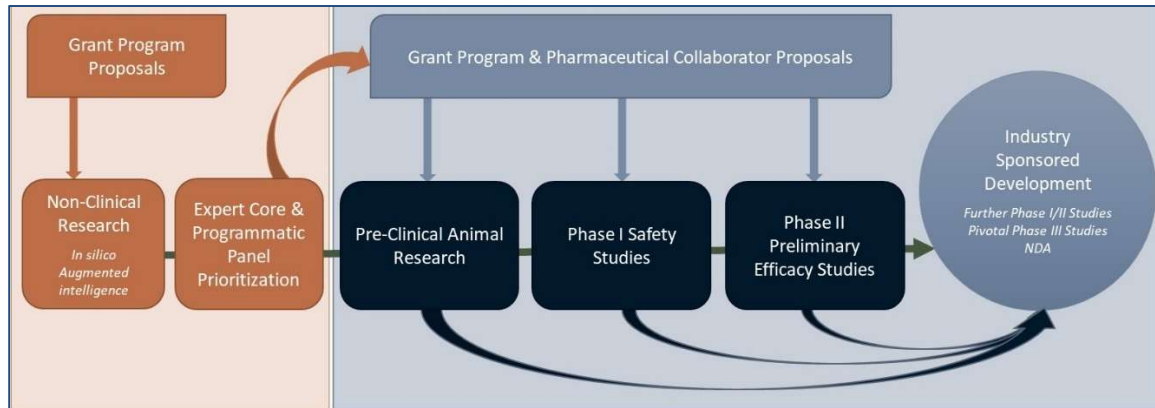
1. New medication targets
2. Novel medications
3. Re-purposed medications
4. Vaccines and other immunotherapies
5. Drug-drug combinations
6. More potent, longer-acting formulations to counteract opioid overdose, including fentanyl and its analogs

For this RFA, we are soliciting for research awards under Goal 1 Drug Discovery (nonclinical) research studies focused on ASUD, particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD and other mental health conditions. The research award must address at least one focus area of emphasis. Separate RFAs are available for pre-clinical animal research studies (Goal 1) and planning awards for human participant clinical trials (Goals 2 and 3).

C. Drug Discovery Research

The PASA has a well-established roadmap for pre-clinical animal studies and human participant clinical trials (Exhibit 1, blue box) that was expanded to include earlier stage drug discovery research. Compounds demonstrating promising results may continue development within the PASA Consortium, through external industry-sponsored research, or be considered for inclusion in future funding applications, as continued funding is not guaranteed.

Exhibit 1. PASA Translation Roadmap



Drug discovery research is intended to increase the potential pool of compounds for investigation in subsequent pre-clinical studies and clinical trials. Approaches to identifying promising compounds for development or repurposing studies that leverage large-scale data through computational-based analysis include but are not limited to *in silico* and augmented intelligence research. Examples may be identifying genes that (a) influence underlying risk, (b) show altered expression, or (c) contain epigenetic changes associated with ASUDs, PTSD and/or other mental health conditions and subsequently compounds/therapeutics that interact with those genes. Empirical evidence supports these strategies, as drugs with such accompanying genetic evidence succeed in clinical trials twice as often as those without. Recent advances in genetics have led to the discovery of common changes in the human genome that influence psychiatric disorders including ASUDs and PTSD. In parallel, there is an increasing wealth of information from other biological domains including gene expression (protein coding, long noncoding, micro), and epigenetics including DNA methylation and histone modification. Integrated multi-omic investigations represent an opportunity to identify targets for translational studies not obvious via a single domain of investigation. However, drug discovery studies rarely focus on the specific goal of producing prioritized targets for future translational studies. The gap between drug discovery and translational efforts impedes progress toward clinical trials and identifying improved therapies for disorders disproportionately impacting SMs and Veterans.

The primary goal of the drug discovery approach is to bridge this gap within a systematic and rigorous framework to identify new biological targets for existing compound repurposing studies. This will be accomplished by (1) leveraging extant omic results and resources, (2) generating new supplemental data in drug discovery areas lacking sufficient depth, (3) creating an integrated catalog of results and biological targets, and (4) generating a prioritized list of existing candidate compounds for future repurposing studies. These resources will be shared with the drug repurposing community and PASA investigators to facilitate award program applications from a broader scope of compounds thereby leading to an increased success rate.

III. Submission Information

A. Types of Studies to be Awarded

Type	Period of Performance	Maximum Total Cost (Direct and Indirect)
Drug Discovery Research	24 months	\$600,000

Note: **Maximum total cost includes direct and indirect costs.**

B. Application

All applications must include the following elements (as applicable) in the order as listed in this announcement. Page limits are noted where applicable. Failure to include a required element may result in the application not being reviewed. Start each component on a new page with the component title, PI name, and study title at the top of the first page.

Questions about the application process will be received; with answers provided on a rolling basis and posted on a FAQ page of the PASA website.

B.1 Pre-application

A pre-application must be submitted prior to submission of the full application. The pre-application shall not exceed four pages and provide:

- The title of the application;
- The name(s) and affiliation(s) of the PI and, if any, co-PIs;
- The address, phone number, and e-mail address of the PI;
- List the strategic goal(s) and focus area(s) the proposed research addresses.
- A brief overview of the study including research objectives; and
- A list of the site(s) where the study will be conducted.

All pre-applications must be submitted as a PDF file by e-mail no later than 11:59 PM Eastern Time on **April 15, 2026**; to:
PASA_RFA@rti.org

The pre-applications will be given a 'go'/'no go' designation from the PASA Management Core, with those designated as 'go' to proceed with a full application. If any concerns or questions are identified upon review of the pre-application, the PASA Management Core will contact the listed investigators.

Pre-application Screening Criteria: To determine the technical merits and relevance to the ASUDRP research goals and focus, screening will be based on the following criteria:

- Alignment with Topic Area: Whether the proposed project relates to the ASUDRP research goals and focus.
- Research Idea: How well the research hypothesis or objective is presented.
- Impact: To what degree does the proposed work have the potential to inform the needs of future clinical trials of potential medications or medication combinations in patients with ASUD and, particularly but not limited to comorbid PTSD and other mental health conditions

Following the pre-application screening, PIs will be notified as to whether or not they are a 'go' (aka: invited to submit a full application).

B.2 Drug Discovery Award Application Submission Requirements

All final applications must be submitted as a PDF file by e-mail no later than 11:59 PM Eastern Time on **June 17, 2026**; to: PASA_RFA@rti.org

The full application consists of the following components:

Item	Description
Application Cover Sheet	See Appendix A for this template.
Title	Provide the title of the proposed drug discovery project.
Abstract	Include an abstract for the proposed drug discovery research project.
Personnel (3-page limit)	Demonstrate that the PIs, collaborators, and other researchers are well suited to the project and have an ongoing record of accomplishments. Describe any collaboration between civilian, Department of Defense (Department of War), or VA personnel. Include an organizational chart and briefly describe the roles and responsibilities of the study personnel.
Research Objectives (1-page limit)	Research objectives should be clearly defined and sensibly tied to a definite research question. A clear endpoint or set of endpoints should be tied to each objective.
Study Rationale (1-page limit)	<p>Projects should address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field. The study should address an area of need in line with ASUDRP research goals and focus. The rationale should also clearly describe how the proposed study will align with CDMRP/ASURP research and clinical goals to maximally benefit Service Members (SMs) and Veterans.</p> <p>Describe the scientific rationale of the proposed study for the treatment of ASUD, particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD or other mental health conditions. The proposed study should address an area of emphasis targeted by the PASA. Describe the feasibility of the research to include a critical review and analysis of the literature and supporting data.</p>
Research Strategy (10-page limit)	<p>The overall strategy, methodology, statistical plan, and analyses should be well reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific objectives of the project. The plans for obtaining and/or generating data should be clearly defined and feasible. Sample size estimates must be included and supported by a power analysis or other justification that demonstrates the adequacy of the sample size.</p> <p>Sex as a Biological Variable (SABV) Strategy: Describe the strategy for how sex will be considered as a biological variable. This strategy should include a brief discussion of what is currently known regarding sex differences in the applicable research area. Clearly articulate how sex as a biological variable will be factored into the data analysis plan and how data will be collected and disaggregated by</p>

Item	Description
	<p>sex. If needed, provide a strong rationale for proposing a single-sex study, based on justification from scientific literature, preliminary data or other relevant considerations. Refer to the CDMRP Directive on Sex as a Biological Variable in Research for additional information: https://cdmrp.health.mil/pubs/pdf/CDMRP%20SABV%20Directive_Revised_MA_R2025_signed.pdf</p>
<p>Impact and Innovation (1-page limit)</p>	<p>State how the project has the potential to significantly inform military or VA health care and practice and promote a greater understanding of the treatment of ASUD, particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD or other mental health conditions and reduce the number of opioid and other substance related deaths.</p> <p>A successful application will also describe how the proposed research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningfully expands on existing research without overlapping current studies • Uniquely contributes to the understanding of ASUD, particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD or other mental health conditions and not replicate current studies but move beyond with an innovative approach or objectives. • Promotes the development of improvements in pharmacotherapies for ASUD, particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD or other mental health conditions leading to approval and marketing.
<p>Environment/Research Sites (1-page limit)</p>	<p>Applicants should describe how the project benefits from unique features of the scientific environment, or collaborative arrangements. A description of all locations should also be provided. Also describe how each proposed site contributes to the study and how these sites will be able to complete the study protocol.</p>
<p>Dissemination/Transition Plan (1-page limit)</p>	<p>Describe how the findings of this study will be disseminated to inform future pre-clinical studies and clinical trials</p>
<p>PASA Management Core Collaboration (1-page limit)</p>	<p>The PASA Management Core should be meaningfully integrated into the research to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support oversight and coordination of the project • Receive all study data in a timely manner and function as a data repository • Provide analytic support in designing study randomization and performing statistical analyses <p>The applicant should describe how the PI will integrate the proposed project with the existing PASA Management Core.</p>

Item	Description
Research and Related Budget and Budget Justification	<p>A budget justification which describes the labor and other direct costs necessary to complete the project must be included here. The budget should reflect yearly direct costs for each year over the entire period of performance. Because PASA project funding is available through a CDMRP/ASURP award, all study subaward funds will be subject to policies and restrictions based on the CDMRP/ASURP source of this funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget to be submitted using R&R Budget form • Forms are available on the PASA website
Quad Chart	<p>All applications must include a quad chart (separate from the application) briefly describing the study including rationale, population to be studied, sample size, study sites, methods, total budget, and a picture or other graphic describing the study. An example of a CDMRP-compliant quad chart can be found at:</p> <p>https://ebrap.org/eBRAP/public/Program.htm</p>
Supporting Documentation	<p>Start each document on a new page with complete header information. Include only those components described below; inclusion of items not requested may result in the removal of those items or administrative withdrawal of the application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • References Cited: List the references cited in the Research Methods (including URLs if available) using a standard reference format that includes the full citation (i.e., author[s], year published, title of reference, source of reference, volume, chapter, page numbers, and publisher, as appropriate). • List of Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Symbols: Provide a list of all abbreviations, acronyms, and symbols used in the application. • Facilities, Existing Equipment, and Other Resources: Describe the facilities and equipment available for performance of the proposed project and any additional facilities or equipment proposed for acquisition at no cost to the award. Indicate whether Government-furnished facilities or equipment are proposed for use. If so, reference should be made to the original or present Government award under which the facilities or equipment items are now accountable. • Publications or Patent Abstracts (3-document limit): Include relevant publication URLs or patent abstracts. If publications are not publicly available, then a copy/copies of the published manuscript(s) must be included here. Extra items will not be reviewed.

Item	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters of Organizational Support (<i>2-page limit per letter</i>): Provide a letter (or letters, if applicable), signed by the Department Chair or appropriate organization official, reflecting the institution’s commitment to the completion of the study, including laboratory space, equipment, and other resources available for the project. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters of Collaboration (if applicable) (<i>2-page limit per letter</i>): Provide a signed letter from each collaborating individual or organization that will demonstrate that the PI has the support or resources necessary for the proposed work. Letters of support from a collaborating pharmaceutical company are welcomed and desired. <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research & Related Senior/Key Person Profile: All applications must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o PI Biographical Sketch (<i>4-page limit</i>) o PI Current/Pending Support (<i>no page limit</i>) o Key Personnel Biographical Sketches (<i>4-page limit each</i>) o Key Personnel Current/Pending Support (<i>no page limit</i>) <p>In accordance with National Security Presidential Memorandum-33 and all associated laws, all fundamental research funded by the Department of Defense (Department of War) must be evaluated for affiliations with foreign entities. All applicant organizations must disclose foreign affiliations of all key personnel named on applications. Failure to disclose foreign affiliations of key personnel shall lead to withdrawal of recommendations to fund applications. Applicant organizations may be presented with an opportunity to mitigate identified risks, particularly those pertaining to influence from foreign entities specified in law. Implementation of mitigation discussions and utilization of the Department of Defense (Department of War) Component Decision Matrix must decrease risk of foreign influence in accordance with the above-mentioned laws and guidance prior to award.</p> <p>Forms available on the PASA website.</p>

B.3 Full Application Format

All applications should be submitted as a single PDF file; except for the full budget PDF form (which should be a separate file). All text should be in Calibri with a font size of no less than 11. All margins should be at least one inch. Inclusion of URLs to provide additional information is prohibited in all sections.

IV. Full Application Review and Selection Process

A. Peer Review

To determine technical merit, a peer-review committee will evaluate all applications according to the following scored criteria, which are of equal importance. For multisite studies, feasibility, personnel, and

environment will be evaluated across all sites.

A.1 Personnel

- How the background and expertise of the PI(s) and other key personnel demonstrate their abilities to perform the proposed work.
- How the levels of effort by the PI(s) and other co-investigators are appropriate to ensure the successful conduct of the project.
- How the PI(s)'s and co-investigators' record(s) of accomplishment demonstrate their abilities to accomplish the proposed work.

A.2 Study Rationale and Research Strategy

- How well the scientific rationale supports research for identifying potential compound(s) for treatment of AUD, particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD or other mental health conditions.
- How well the feasibility of such research is demonstrated by a critical review and analysis of the literature, supporting data, and logical reasoning.
- How well the application describes existing drug discovery research intended to identify potential therapeutics for AUD, particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD or other mental health conditions.
- How well the application acknowledges potential problems or delays and addresses alternative approaches and solutions.
- Whether the strategy for considering sex as a biological variable is appropriate to the objectives of the study or whether the justification for a single-sex study is sufficiently strong.

A.3 Impact and Innovation

- How the proposed research, if successful, will:
 - Promote greater understanding of the treatment of AUD, particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD or other mental health conditions and reduce the number of opioid and other substance use-related deaths.
 - Promote the development of improvements in pharmacotherapies for AUD, particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD or other mental health conditions.
 - Support future potential approval and marketing of pharmacotherapies for AUD, particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD or other mental health conditions.
- How the proposed research uniquely contributes to the understanding of ASUD, particularly but not limited to comorbid with PTSD or other mental health conditions using an innovative approach or objectives.

A.4 Environment/Research sites

- How the scientific environment is appropriate for the proposed research.

- How the research requirements are supported by the availability of and accessibility to facilities and resources.
- How the quality and extent of organizational support are appropriate for the proposed research.

A.5 Dissemination/Transition Plan

- To what degree the plan describes how the findings will be disseminated to inform future pre-clinical studies and clinical trials.

In addition, the following unscored criteria will also contribute to the overall evaluation of the application:

A.6 Budget

- Whether the budget is appropriate for the proposed research and within the funding limitations.

A.7 Application Presentation

- To what extent the writing, clarity, and presentation of the application components influence the ease of review and the understanding of the reviewers.

B. Consortium Steering Committee Review

Following the Peer Review, the PASA Management Core leaders will present the applications to the Consortium Steering Committee for their review. The Consortium Steering Committee will make funding recommendations using the following criteria:

- Ratings and evaluations from peer reviewers
- Relevance to the goal of PASA, as evidenced by the following:
 - Relative impact
 - Program portfolio composition
 - Programmatic relevance
 - Adherence to the intent of the award mechanism

Final recommendation of drug discovery research to be funded will be made by the Consortium Steering Committee.

V. Award Negotiation

If your application is recommended for funding by the Consortium Steering Committee, award negotiations will be held between your institution and the PASA Management Core to establish the scope of the final award consistent with the recommendations of the Consortium Steering Committee and subject to final approval of the ASUDRP. All official negotiations of the budget, terms, and conditions of any resulting award will be conducted between the Business Official of your institution and the RTI Subcontracts Specialist. All subawards, and changes to all subawards that result in substantive changes to the budget, including major modifications of subawards and changes across cost categories, require approval from the Defense Health Agency Contracting Activity Research and Development.

VI. Post-Award Requirements

A. Milestones

The table below outlines milestone expectations for studies post award. Sites and the PASA Management Core shall communicate as deliverables are achieved and ensure progress aligns with the outline below. If additional time is needed due to unforeseen obstacles this should be expressed immediately in orders to address accordingly.

Task	Responsible Party	Timeframe
Subcontract	PI Site and PASA Management Core	Within 4 months of study award
Project Management Plan	PI Site and PASA Management Core	Within 4 months of study award
Any Required Regulatory Oversight Submissions Required (e.g., IRB)	Site	Within 4 months of study award
Supplies Acquired	Site	Within 4 months of study award

B. Project Management Plan

Within 4 months of study award, all studies shall develop a project management plan in conjunction with the PASA Management Core and submit for review and approval by the PASA Leadership. The plan must detail all data sources and plans/timelines for obtaining the data, analyses to be completed to meet study objectives, and measures that will be put in place to ensure quality. The plan must be approved by PASA Leadership in writing prior to the initiation of study activities.

Drug Discovery research may not require adherence to GLP, and a determination will be made concerning GLP in consultation between the PI and the PASA Management Core. The links below provide information concerning these requirements.

C. Reporting

Quarterly and annual progress reports will be required in the format shown on the PASA website. In addition to written progress reports, oral presentations may be requested, particularly to the Consortium Steering Committee. For studies proposing non-exempt clinical research, planned and actual enrollment reporting on the basis of sex, race, and/or ethnicity will be required at the time of award negotiations and each annual and final report using the Public Health Service Inclusion Enrollment Report form.

D. Quality Assurance

During Project Management Plan development, a quality assurance plan must be developed in line with PASA’s quality assurance guidelines. This plan will include details of records maintenance at the site, timely data recording, verification, and routine reporting/submission of data to the PASA Management Core and planned checks for data consistency.

E. Publications

A PASA priority is the rapid publication and presentation of study results in high quality peer reviewed journals and venues. Investigators should adhere to PASA publication policy which is available on the PASA website. A primary manuscript should be completed in a timely fashion. PASA Leadership will implement corrective action when 3 months have passed between final analysis and submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

Appendix A: Application Cover Sheet

Project Title:

Principal Investigator's Name:

Position/Title:

Department:

Organization Name:

Street:

City:

State:

Zip:

E-mail:

Phone:

Direct costs:

Indirects:

Total costs:

Proposed Start Date:

Proposed End Date:

PASA target disorders: (please list all that apply)

Alcohol

Opiates

Marijuana

Stimulants

Other substance (specify)

PTSD

TBI

Other mental health conditions (specify)