

Crisis & Legal Communications

The Challenge: In 2021, CleanSlate Centers, a national addiction treatment chain, was preparing to settle litigation with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the federal government concerning allegations including unnecessary testing. This was CleanSlate's second high-level governmental investigation in five years, and the Commonwealth Attorney General was looking to score an easy political win – eyeing the 2022 Governor's race – by making a media push promoting the settlement. While CleanSlate vehemently denied the allegations and stood by the integrity of its staff and mission, the negative fallout from the settlement could have resulted in long-term hiring and retention issues as well as greater reluctance from local communities to welcome new centers.

Our Strategy: With the settlement due to finalize at any moment, TASC crafted a strategy aimed at minimizing the negative fallout from the settlement becoming public. TASC prepared the CEO for potential interviews and tough questions from major stakeholders. TASC ensured that regular staffers were briefed on proper protocols in the event of media inquiries.

Not waiting for the AG to make the announcement, TASC moved to offer the story as an exclusive to *The Associated Press*. With the story already expected to be covered by the AP and go far and wide regardless, this would ensure that CleanSlate's messaging was included in almost all incarnations of the story as it was distributed across the Commonwealth by the AP wire service.

Results: With the AG planning a post-New Year's press release and media push on the settlement, TASC took the initiative and placed the story with the AP during the week after Christmas and before New Year's Eve, a 'dead' period when article readership is extremely low. As a result, attention and furor around the settlement was extremely minimal, and CleanSlate Centers saw almost no strain on stakeholder relationships as a result. As well, the settlement saw almost zero coverage in broadcast or on radio platforms. TASC's post-settlement media push for CleanSlate included landing CleanSlate's commentary in [The Hill](#) and ultimately resulted in the settlement and even the previous investigation being significantly pushed down in Google SEO search results for the company's name.

