

Use these talking points as a reference in making your case to your legislators. We encourage you to add any relevant information about how these issues affect you or your organization. The more detail you can provide about the effect on your community, the more impact you'll have in your meetings with lawmakers and staff!

You do not have to talk about all six issues in every meeting! Pick a few top issues to discuss with each lawmaker. *(Hint: Check the Hill Day app to find out if your legislator sits on a committee that has jurisdiction over one of these bills, and talk with them about that issue. If you don't have a legislator on a committee of jurisdiction, work with your state delegation to decide the issues that are most important to discuss with each office.)*

SUBSTANCE USE AND MENTAL HEALTH APPROPRIATIONS

ASK Please support funding for the substance use and mental health priorities listed in this fact sheet.

- Years of sustained funding cuts continue to harm Americans' ability to access evidence-based treatments and lifesaving services and supports. Community-based providers of mental health and addiction treatment services are struggling to meet the growing demand for services.
- SAMHSA programs are a critical source of targeted funding that allows states to implement proven and effective services for individuals living with a mental health or substance use conditions.
- [Browse through the fact sheet to learn more about key SAMHSA and NIH programs, and add information specific to federally-funded programs that your organization or your community rely on.](#)

STRENGTHENING MEDICAID AND OTHER HEALTH COVERAGE FOR PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS OR ADDICTION

ASK As Congress considers future changes to our health care system, please support the priorities outlined in our fact sheet.

- Preserve federal funding for Medicaid. Converting the program to a per capita cap or block grant will shift costs to states, forcing them into terrible decisions about which populations and services to cut.
- Retain the Medicaid expansion and allow non-expansion states the option to expand. Individuals with mental illness or addiction were among the largest beneficiaries of the Medicaid expansion and will suffer disproportionately if their coverage is taken away.
- Preserve the Essential Health Benefits and protections for people with pre-existing conditions. Without these protections, individuals with mental illness or addiction would be at risk of losing access to treatment for their condition, being denied health coverage altogether or being priced out of coverage by expensive premiums.
- [Browse through the fact sheet to learn more about our groups' recommendations, and add information specific to those that you, your organization or your community rely on.](#)

EXPAND EXCELLENCE IN MENTAL HEALTH ACT

ASK Please cosponsor the Expand Excellence in Mental Health Act when it is introduced.

- The Excellence Act demonstration is a two-year, eight-state initiative to expand Americans' access to community-based mental health and addiction care through certified clinics (known as CCBHCs).
- CCBHCs are transforming our overburdened, underfunded treatment system by establishing comprehensive standards for care delivery and quality reporting, and providing a sustainable Medicaid payment rate that supports that care.
- CCBHCs are helping strengthen states' response to the opioid crisis. Addiction care is embedded in CCBHCs' services, which include screening for substance use disorders, detoxification, outpatient addiction services, medication-assisted treatment and more.
- Nineteen states went through the year-long planning process and applied to participate in the demonstration. Every state that wishes to create and sustain quality service systems should be able to do so. The current eight states are already seeing gains from the program and should be allowed to extend their activities beyond the two-year limit.
- [Add information specific to your organization or your community.](#)

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS IMPROVEMENT ACT

ASK for Representatives: Please cosponsor the Mental Health Access Improvement Act (H.R. 3032).

ASK for Senators: Please cosponsor the Mental Health Access Improvement Act when it is introduced.

- Older Americans have high rates of mental illness and suicide, yet have lower rates of treatment than others. With 75 percent of U.S. counties experiencing a severe shortage of behavioral health professionals, more than 100 million Americans live in areas that lack sufficient providers.
- MFTs and licensed counselors are more likely than other professionals to practice in areas with a workforce shortage. Adding these providers to Medicare would immediately alleviate the strain on our nation's behavioral health workforce serving Medicare enrollees.
- Counselors and MFTs have similar training and licensure standards to similar providers already included within Medicare.
- Congress supports this change. Similar legislation has won bipartisan support in the last eight Congresses and was passed in either the full House or Senate on several separate occasions.
- [Add information specific to your organization or your community.](#)

STRENGTHENING THE ADDICTION TREATMENT WORKFORCE ACT

ASK for Senators: Please cosponsor the Strengthening the Addiction Treatment Workforce Act (S. 1453).

ASK for Representatives: Please cosponsor this legislation when it is introduced.

- States urgently need a larger addiction treatment and recovery support workforce to address the opioid addiction crisis, yet existing federal policy disincentivizes them from working at addiction treatment facilities.
- The bill would allow addiction facilities in workforce shortage areas to offer potential employees loan forgiveness through the National Health Service Corps (NHSC), as mental health and primary care providers already do.
- By expanding NHSC sites to include qualified addiction facilities, this legislation will improve access to desperately needed addiction services for millions of Americans.
- [Add information specific to your organization or your community.](#)

IMPROVING ACCESS TO BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ACT

ASK Please cosponsor the Improving Access to Behavioral Health Information Technology Act (S. 1732/H.R.3331).

- Comprehensive care coordination is needed to combat the nation's opioid epidemic. If mental health and addiction treatment providers cannot adopt health IT at a rate comparable to hospitals and physicians' offices, it will soon become impossible to coordinate clinical care electronically and curb this emerging public health crisis.
- Most behavioral health treatment providers lack the resources needed to implement EHRs.
- Expected savings cannot materialize if behavioral health providers remain excluded from health IT funding.
- This legislation tasks the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation (CMMI) with creating a demonstration project to incentivize the use of EHRs in various settings, including mental health and addiction treatment organizations.
- [Add information specific to your organization or your community.](#)