

Use these talking points as a reference when 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 seven 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.

- Congress made clear its support of addiction and mental health funding in the Fiscal Year 2018 omnibus spending package. Yet despite this increase in federal spending, sustained funding cuts in previous years limit 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.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) programs are a critical source of targeted funding that allows states to implement proven and effective services for individuals living with mental health or substance use conditions.
- [Browse through the fact sheet to learn more about key SAMHSA and National Institutes of Health \(NIH\) programs and add information specific to federally-funded programs relied on by your organization or community.](#)

EXCELLENCE IN MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION TREATMENT EXPANSION ACT

ASK Please cosponsor the Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Expansion Act (S. 1905/H.R. 3931).

- The Excellence in Mental Health and Addiction Act is a two-year, eight-state initiative to expand Americans' access to community-based addiction and mental health care through Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs).
- CCBHCs are transforming our treatment system from a patchwork of underfunded, overburdened organizations to a thriving array of organizations that meet core standards for comprehensive, high-quality treatment.
- They are strengthening states' response to the opioid crisis. In addition to comprehensive addiction treatment services, more than 80 percent of CCBHCs report launching or expanding medication-assisted treatment (MAT) since becoming CCBHCs in mid-2017.
- CCBHCs have hired hundreds of new addiction clinicians, enabling them to increase the number of patients served, work with community partners to expand use of naloxone – the overdose reversal drug – and launch other new opioid treatment initiatives.
- Eleven more states are poised and ready to participate. Despite widespread interest, states that planned to implement CCBHCs have been shut out of the program due to the eight-state limit. Every state that wishes to create and sustain quality service systems should be able to do so.
- [Add information specific to your organization or your community.](#)

MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS IMPROVEMENT ACT

ASK Please cosponsor the Mental Health Access Improvement Act (S. 1879/H.R. 3032).

- Older Americans have high rates of mental illness and suicide, yet have lower treatment rates than other groups. 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.
- Marriage and family therapists (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 MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION TREATMENT WORKFORCE

ASK for Senators: Please cosponsor the Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Act (S. 2524), Strengthening the Addiction Treatment Workforce Act (S. 1453) and Improving Access to Mental Health Services Act (S. 2533).

ASK for Representatives: Please cosponsor H.R. 5102 and support the House versions of the Strengthening the Addiction Treatment Workforce Act and Improving Access to Mental Health Services Act upon introduction.

- States urgently need a larger addiction and mental health treatment and recovery support workforce to address the opioid addiction and suicide crises.
- These three bills would strengthen and grow the behavioral health workforce through student loan forgiveness strategies.
- S. 1453 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.
- S. 2533 would allow addiction organizations to offer important recruitment tools through the NHSC to compete for limited staff in our nation's underserved communities.
- S. 2533 would allow NHSC professionals to provide mental health services in schools, community-based organizations and in patients' homes.
- By adding addiction treatment sites and professions to the NHSC and expanding NHSC mental health service settings, these three bills will improve access to desperately needed mental health and addiction services for millions of Americans.
- [Add information specific to your organization or your community.](#)

COMPREHENSIVE ADDICTION AND RECOVERY ACT (CARA) 2.0 OF 2018

ASK Please cosponsor the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) 2.0 of 2018 (S. 2456/ H.R. 5311).

- The 2016 passage of CARA was an important step in addressing then nation's opioid and overall addiction crisis as it focused on a broad and coordinated response: prevention, treatment, recovery, law enforcement, criminal justice reform and overdose reversal.
- Despite these efforts, the crisis continues and more must be done.
- The bill supports evidence-based methods to treat addiction, providing desperately-needed funding for addiction treatment including MAT. The bill also dedicates funding to recovery support services like recovery housing and community centers.
- Opioid addiction is a public health crisis that needs a multifaceted solution that connects the broad array of entities fighting addiction including non-profit organizations, states, law enforcement agencies and others.
- [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 electronic health records (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.](#)

MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS ACT

ASK Please cosponsor the Mental Health in Schools Act (S. 1370/H.R. 2913).

- The legislation builds on successful, evidence-based programs within SAMHSA.
- These programs strengthen partnerships between local education and community programs like local primary health, juvenile justice and child welfare entities.
- Seventeen million youth have had a diagnosable mental health disorder and one in four have substance use conditions, but less than 35 percent will receive treatment.
- Given the early onset of emotional, mental health and substance use disorders and their subsequent direct and indirect costs, investments in early intervention programs, especially those that better connect health and education systems, should be prioritized.
- [Add information specific to your organization or your community.](#)