

2020 Hill Day Talking Points

On Wednesday, June 24, Hill Day at Home advocates will engage in series of advocacy outreach activities to connect with their members of Congress and educate them on the needs of the mental health and addiction community. Hill Day at Home will send advocates draft social media posts and action alerts and we need you to customize this language with your personal stories. This customization is key! It is how legislators will hear your story in your own words.

Use the following talking points to familiarize yourselves with our 2020 Hill Day at Home legislative “asks” and take time prior to Wednesday, June 24, to customize your story and collect data relevant to you, your organization, your district and your state. The more details you can provide about the effect these issues are having on you and your community, the more impact you will have in your outreach and connections to lawmakers! You will be able to add these details into the stories you tell and the actions you take on the 24th.

Emergency Appropriation of \$38.5 Billion for Mental Health and Addiction Treatment

Request: Support an emergency appropriation of \$38.5 billion for providers of mental health and addiction treatment services, collectively known as behavioral health organizations.

Review [details of this historic ask](#).

- Community-based providers of mental health and substance use treatment services were already struggling to meet the growing demand for services, even before COVID-19 began.
- COVID-19 has exacerbated the need for behavioral health services. The pandemic has increased anxiety, fear, isolation and grief, leading to declining mental health and increased substance use in our communities that will only continue to get worse. [In a poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation](#), 45% of adults say their mental health has been affected by the pandemic. For many, the fear, anxiety and instability brought on by the COVID-19 emergency is making existing mental health and substance use conditions worse and triggering relapse.
- The behavioral health system is at risk of collapsing. The National Council surveyed community behavioral health organizations and found that because of COVID-19, nearly all (92.6%) have reduced their operations. The impacts are more severe for smaller organizations that serve 2,000 patients or less annually, who have canceled, rescheduled or turned away 36.1% of patients.
- Urgent assistance is needed for behavioral health organizations to maintain staff and to keep their doors open for the growing number of Americans seeking behavioral health care. If our behavioral health system does indeed collapse, the people we serve throughout our communities will flood other aspects of the already over-burdened system including community health centers, urgent care facilities and emergency departments.
- The Department of Health and Human Services has opened portals so that Medicare and Medicaid providers can receive relief funds, but the funding made available to date is not enough to address the current crisis.
- *You will be able to add details about the financial needs of you and/or your organization. Think about how COVID-19 is affecting your ability to provide or receive mental health and substance use treatment. Provide any state or local data, where applicable.*

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Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry Act of 2020 (S. 3312)

Request: Co-sponsor the Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry Act in the Senate
Review the [S. 3312 fact sheet](#).

- From 2006 to 2016, suicide was the leading single cause of death in local jails each year.¹ Incarcerated individuals with mental health conditions are a particularly vulnerable group because existing treatment programs are inadequately resourced to meet the growing need.
- Many individuals involved with the criminal justice system with mental illness respond well if they have access to the right to medical and psychological interventions that result in increased medication adherence and continuity of care. The combination of services will help people stay in recovery and adhere to a treatment plan.
- This legislation allows for law enforcement to partner with community-based behavioral health providers to provide mental health treatment and crisis stabilization for incarcerated individuals and promote warm hand-offs to community-based care upon re-entry to reduce recidivism.
- The bill authorizes community-level crisis response programs, targeted training programs related to increasing medication adherence including the use of long-acting antipsychotic medications, strengthening capacity to reduce suicides during incarceration, a national technical assistance center to support justice and mental health agencies and more.
- *Share your experience providing services to incarcerated individuals.*
- *Share any examples of the need for community-based care for incarcerated individuals upon reentry.*

National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 (H.R. 4194/S. 2661)

Request: Pass the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act in the House
Review the [H.R. 4194/S. 2661 fact sheet](#).

- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death for all Americans and suicides are on the rise in nearly all demographics across the nation.
- COVID-19 has exacerbated the need for behavioral health services. The pandemic has increased anxiety, fear, isolation and grief, leading to declining mental health and increased substance use in our communities that will only continue to get worse.
- A dedicated three-digit number (9-8-8) for those experiencing a mental health crisis would make it easier for millions of Americans to access critical mental health resources and receive lifesaving help.
- 9-8-8 would make it easier for millions of Americans to access timely and effective crisis intervention services, will better meet the growing need for such services and will ultimately help get people in crisis access the appropriate level of care in the community for mental health and addiction concerns by aligning crisis services for these issues with other emergency services for things like fires, automobile accidents and social service referrals.
- The Senate unanimously passed this legislation in May.
- *If you feel comfortable, you can share personal stories.*
- *If you have state or local data on suicides, you can add those to the message.*

¹Carson, E.A., Cowhig, M.P. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2020, February). Mortality in Local Jails, 2000-2016 – Statistical Tables. Available at: <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/mij0016st.pdf>