

# SHAPING PUBLIC POLICY & ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

Center on Addiction is committed to transforming how our nation addresses addiction. We pair policy research with the firsthand experiences of families to advocate for the policies needed to **prevent addiction, make treatment affordable, improve the quality of care, and demand resources for families**. Through our policy and advocacy work, we aim to **implement a public health approach to addiction and end the stigma** that creates a barrier to effectively addressing addiction. We urge policymakers to take action and work with us to end our nation's addiction crisis.

Our current policy and advocacy priorities focus on affordable treatment, the need for family resources, a public health approach and ending the stigma.

## ADVOCATING FOR AFFORDABLE TREATMENT

Our parity research was featured in a blog published by Health Affairs: [Evaluating The Promise And Potential Of The Parity Act On Its Tenth Anniversary](#)

We promote access to quality addiction care by improving insurance coverage to make treatment affordable. We work to improve compliance and enforcement of the **Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (Parity Act)**, a federal law that requires most insurers to cover mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment the same way they cover treatment for any other disease. We collaborate with other national organizations, including Legal Action Center, Public Health Management Corporation's Research and Evaluation Group (together, the Addiction Solutions Campaign) and the Kennedy Forum (collectively, the National Partners) to promote Parity Act compliance and enforcement.

The [Addiction Solutions Campaign](#) identified inadequacies in the current enforcement in [Parity Tracking Project: Making Parity a Reality](#). To address these inadequacies and ensure commercial and Medicaid plans are fully compliant with the Parity Act, the National Partners launched [Parity at 10](#), a campaign to establish effective models for robust enforcement of the Parity Act in states and to disseminate these models across the country.

Our research reports, [Uncovering Coverage Gaps](#) (a review of 2017 Essential Health Benefits (EHB) Benchmark Plans) and [Uncovering Coverage Gaps II: A Review and Comparison of Addiction Benefits in ACA Plans](#) (review of 2017 ACA Plans), identify gaps in insurance coverage for SUD benefits offered in commercial insurance plans and evaluate the impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on increasing access to evidence-based SUD care. Our research found widespread non-compliance with ACA and parity requirements and inadequate coverage for evidence-based SUD benefits. Among the 2017 ACA Plans, we found only modest improvements with ACA compliance and benefit adequacy compared to the 2017 EHB Benchmark Plans. We use our research findings to inform policymakers about whether policies are working, develop recommendations and create guides and tools to help states improve insurance coverage for SUD services.

## ADVOCATING FOR RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

We're creating a movement to extinguish the deep-rooted misperceptions that surround addiction and prevent our society from investing in the resources required to transform the way our nation addresses addiction. We're asking families to lend their voice to join this movement, focused on education, activation and empowerment.

## LEVERAGING THE VOICES OF FAMILIES AND ADVOCATES

We utilize advocacy tools to encourage Americans to sign petitions, write to lawmakers on specific issues of concern, and alert them to injustices to galvanize them to speak up. As part of our advocacy efforts, more than 1,000 families have signed our [petition](#) to enforce the Parity Act and demand coverage for addiction treatment.

Our federal advocacy efforts are currently focused on the following issues:

- Authorize and appropriate significant funding in the federal budget for addiction resources, including a dedicated funding stream for family support services, which does not currently exist.
- Pass legislation to improve enforcement and implementation of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (H.R. 2874/S.1576 and H.R. 3165/S.1737).
- Remove unnecessary barriers to evidence-based treatment by passing the Mainstreaming Addiction Treatment Act of 2019 (H.R. 2482/S. 2074) to remove the waiver requirement for prescribing buprenorphine.



**87 PERCENT**  
OF CONGRESSIONAL  
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HAVE A CENTER ON  
ADDICTION ADVOCATE



## HELPING FAMILIES TODAY

While we work to inform and shape pertinent policy, we understand that families need help today. We create tools and resources to help families [navigate the addiction treatment system](#), as well as [insurance coverage](#) and filing [appeals](#) and [complaints](#) for denied care.

## ADVOCATING FOR A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH

Decades of research, by our organization and others, show that we can effectively end our nation's addiction crisis by adopting a public health approach. We developed a guide for state policymakers ([Ending the Opioid Crisis](#)) and recommendations for the federal government ([Actions for the Federal Government](#)) to implement a public health approach. We continue to monitor and evaluate state and federal responses to the opioid crisis, tracking policy solutions and legislation to identify best practices and initiatives that align with a public health approach. Together with the Addiction Solutions Campaign, we developed recommendations to provide guidance to states and localities on how to spend funds from the opioid litigation to adopt a public health approach. We also created a [petition](#) to demand that state lawmakers spend funds from the opioid litigation on addiction resources.

## ADVOCATING TO END STIGMA

Although we know how to solve the addiction crisis, we know it is not possible unless we change culture and end stigma. We are combatting stigma by encouraging individuals to share their stories of [loss or recovery](#) and others to [reach out](#) to a parent struggling with addiction and encourage them to take advantage of our [family services](#).

We lift up the voices of families by providing ways for them to share their stories, encouraging open communication and support, building a community of support and making sure parents and caregivers get the resources they need to support their loved one struggling with substance use. We also authored a chapter on stigma and treatment for a book, [The Stigma of Addiction: An Essential Guide](#).

## OUR LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE

We share our policy and advocacy expertise with peers, the public and media.

### PRESENTATIONS

We have participated in the following conferences and discussions:

- National Rx Drug Abuse & Heroin Summit
- The Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Salon Series, The Evidence is In, state of policy solutions to the opioid crisis, with a focus on prevention and treatment of opioid use disorder
- Bipartisan Policy Center, The Role of Litigation in Response to the Opioid Epidemic
- World Congress, Opioid Management: Treatment and Recovery Summit
- Community Catalyst's Gathering for Action on Addiction
- Poynter Institute, Covering the Opioid Crisis Workshops for Journalists

### MEDIA

See our experts in the news:

- **CBS News:** [Opioid overdose more likely than car crash](#)
- **NBC News:** [Federal moves to help opioid crisis not enough, experts say](#)
- **The Washington Post:** [Senate easily passes sweeping opioids legislation, sending to President Trump](#)
- **Mother Jones:** ["Mom, When They Look at Me, They See Dollar Signs"](#)
- **The Hill TV:** [Advocate Courtney Hunter discusses new coalition to tackle opioid addiction](#)
- **New York Times:** [Amid Opioid Crisis, Insurers Restrict Pricey, Less Addictive Painkillers](#)

Read our opinions and viewpoints:

- **Health Affairs Blog:** [Evaluating The Promise And Potential Of The Parity Act On Its Tenth Anniversary; The Federal Government Needs to Take Stronger Action to Prevent Discriminatory Coverage of Methadone](#)
- **Washington Post** (Letters to the Editor): [Pain, opioids and naloxone](#)
- **New York Times** (Letter to the Editor): [Addiction and the Health Law](#)



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