

FACT SHEET: MENTAL HEALTH REFORM

Included in the 21st Century Cures Package

For too long, millions of Americans coping with mental illness and addiction have been faced with a fragmented, broken system in desperate need of overhaul. Recognizing this barrier, U.S. Senator Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and U.S. Senator Bill Cassidy (R-La.) collaborated with mental health professionals, policy experts, consumers, and family members to develop the bipartisan Mental Health Reform Act. Senators Murphy and Cassidy worked with HELP Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander and Ranking Member Patty Murray to build a bipartisan coalition of support around the bill, securing 28 co-sponsors – 14 Republicans and 14 Democrats.

After working to shepherd The Mental Health Reform Act through the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in March of 2016, Murphy has been actively negotiating with both Republicans and Democrats to craft a bill that addresses our nation's most pressing health needs – fixing our broken mental health and substance abuse systems and increasing investments in medical research.

To date, Murphy has conducted more than 30 mental health and substance abuse roundtables, town halls and public hearings with providers, advocates and families in Connecticut.

Mental Health Reforms

Integrates Physical and Mental Health

The bill encourages states to break down walls between physical and mental health care systems by requiring them to identify barriers to integration. States will be eligible for grants to promote integration between primary and behavioral health care for individuals with mental illness along with co-occurring physical health conditions.

Strengthens Transparency and Enforcement of Mental Health Parity

The bill strengthens the enforcement of existing mental health parity protections to ensure that physical and mental health are covered equally by insurers. It requires federal agencies to report on enforcement actions related to the mental health parity law and establishes an enforcement “action plan” informed by key stakeholders. It also requires the government to audit a health plan if it is found to have violated existing mental health parity laws.

Establishes New Programs for Early Intervention and Improves Access to Mental Health Care for Children

The bill establishes a grant program focused on intensive early intervention for infants and young children who are at risk of developing or are showing signs of mental illness. A second grant program supports pediatrician consultation with mental health teams, which has seen great success in states like Massachusetts and Connecticut. The bill also ensures that children covered by Medicaid have access to the full range of early and periodic screening, diagnostic, and treatment services.

Strengthens Suicide Prevention

The bill continues the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline program, and provides information and training for suicide prevention, surveillance, and intervention strategies. It reauthorizes Youth Suicide Early Intervention and Prevention Strategies grants to states and tribes, and establishes suicide prevention and intervention program grants for adults.

Establishes New National Mental Health Policy Laboratory

The bill establishes a new entity to fund innovation grants that identify new and effective models of care, and demonstration grants to bring effective models to scale for adults and children.

Reauthorizes Successful Grant Programs

The bill reauthorizes key programs like the Community Mental Health Block Grants and state-based data collection. It modernizes the mental health and substance use disorder block grants, streamlines the application process, and promotes the use of evidence-based practices within states. It continues grants to states and communities to help train teachers, emergency services personnel and others to recognize signs and symptoms of mental illness. Additionally, it reauthorizes grants to train mental health providers such as psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and paraprofessionals.

Strengthens Leadership and Accountability for Federal Mental Health and Substance Use Programs

The bill creates an Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services who will be responsible for overseeing grants and promoting best practices. The Assistant Secretary will work with other federal agencies and key stakeholders to coordinate mental health services across the federal system and help them to identify and implement effective and promising models of care. The bill also establishes a Chief Medical Officer to advise on evidence-based and promising best practices emphasizing a clinical focus.

Develops New Educational Materials on Privacy Protections

The bill requires HHS to develop educational materials to help patients, clinicians and family members understand when personal health information can be shared to clear up confusion.

Opioid Treatment & Prevention

The bill provides \$1 billion over 2 years for grants targeting opioid abuse prevention and treatment activities, such as improving prescription drug monitoring programs, implementing prevention activities, training for health care providers, and expanding access to opioid treatment programs

Funding for NIH & the Cancer Moonshot

The bill provides over \$4.8 billion over 10 years to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for the Precision Medicine Initiative, the Brain Research Through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies Initiative, cancer research, and regenerative medicine using adult stem cells.

The bill provides \$500 million to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) over 10 years to implement provisions in Title III to move drugs and medical devices to patients more quickly, while maintaining the same standard for safety and effectiveness.

Why We Need to Act on Mental Health & Addiction

- Approximately 44 million Americans, or 1 in 5 adults, experiences a mental illness in any given year
- More than 50% of adults and children with mental health conditions received no mental health treatment in the past year
- Serious mental illness costs over \$193 billion per year in lost productivity
- According to the CDC, opioids (including prescription pain relievers and heroin) killed more than 28,000 people in 2014, more than any year on record.
- 78 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose