

Substance Use Disorder Coalition of Texas' Policy Priorities

Connecting the dots between addiction and recovery

Substance Use Disorder (SUD), involving alcohol and other drugs, is a complex, public health issue that drives costs across a wide range of areas including health care, criminal justice, and homelessness. SUD is a chronic illness that requires a comprehensive recovery-oriented system of care approach that includes prevention, treatment and ongoing recovery support services. Although approximately 8% of Texans (2,160,000) need addiction treatment, only 10% of these (216,000) receive treatment. The good news is that, today, approximately 10% of Texans (2.7 million) are living healthy, productive lives in long-term recovery. Not only does this prove that recovery is possible, but with the right support, recovery should be expected.

Treatment and Prevention

Economic research has consistently shown that an investment in SUD prevention and treatment delivers a strong economic return to the State. There are evidence-based solutions that reduce the cost and consequences of addiction.

- Expand capacity and increase access to a Comprehensive System of Prevention, Treatment and Recovery Support Services
- Increase funding for prevention services in order to decrease underage use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs
- Reduce the Penalty for Less-than-a-gram Possession Offenses to a Class A Misdemeanor
- Improve access to treatment and reduce lifelong felony consequences for people with addiction
- Provide alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent drug offenders including addiction treatment and ongoing recovery support services
- Increase the alcohol excise tax by a dime a drink generating \$708 million annually while decreasing the health costs associated with hazardous alcohol use and reducing underage drinking
- Increase funding for parents with substance use issues to prevent children from entering the foster care system
- Increase fee for service rates for outpatient treatment

Harm Reduction

Harm reduction is a public health approach that seeks to reduce the harms and costs associated with drug use.

- Permit syringe exchange to reduce the transmission of HIV, Hepatitis C and other costly health issues related to I.V. drug use
- Establish a statewide Good Samaritan policy to save lives by reducing overdose death and to encourage calling 911 in the case of alcohol poisoning or of an overdose emergency

Housing

Stable housing provides the foundation upon which people build their lives. Without a safe, affordable place to live, it is almost impossible to achieve good health or to achieve one's full potential. This is especially true for persons with substance use disorders, who need a spectrum of supportive and specialized housing choices that cost effectively match their evolving needs.

- Add alcohol- and drug-free recovery homes to Boarding Home Facility Exemptions in Sec. 260.022 of the Health and Safety Code.
- Ensure availability of funds for treatment and support services to individuals experiencing homelessness
- Ensure funding to provide supportive housing rental assistance for individuals with substance use disorder
- Expand public-private partnerships to address chronic homelessness through housing opportunities.

Parity and Coverage

Substance Use Disorders are treatable with effective interventions. Access to insurance is an important factor in whether an individual will receive timely and adequate treatment for optimal recovery.

- Expand authority for the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) to regulate and enforce the requirements of the federal parity law and regulations, including “non-quantitative limitations”, for all state-regulated health plans.
- Survey health plans to evaluate their compliance with parity protections.
- Improve the complaint process for consumers and providers who may have encountered a parity violation
- Close the coverage gap and retain the 1115 Waiver to facilitate recovery for Texans with mental health and substance use disorder

Recovery Workforce

With a growing population and an aging workforce, Texas is facing significant workforce shortages. This is especially evident in rural counties, which impacts access to substance use treatment and mental health services.

- Expand opportunities for the provision of peer support services/recovery coach services including, but not limited to, making peer support services a Medicaid-reimbursable service in all appropriate settings.
- Add Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor and Peer Support Specialty/Recovery Coaches to the list of providers.
- Modify facility licensing rules so that services can be provided in rural areas. Current restrictions make it difficult to find providers in rural areas