Welcome!
Nearly one in five Americans is living with mental illness and one in 12 is living with addiction. As a current or aspiring policymaker, you play a critical role in putting an end to the separate and unequal system of care they currently face. Show your constituents you care by making these issues — and their solutions — part of your policy agenda. This toolkit provides language and content to help you articulate your positions and stand up for mental health.

Use this toolkit and other Mental Health for US resources to:
- Learn about the impact of mental health and addiction on American communities.
- Learn how better policy and regulations can improve our nation’s health care system, prioritize mental health and addiction treatment, and prevent suicide and overdose deaths.
- Listen to what Americans have to say about mental health and addiction—and what they want you to do about it.

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About Mental Health for US
Mental Health for US is a nonpartisan educational initiative focused on elevating mental health and addiction in national policy conversations by empowering grassroots advocates and improving candidate and policymaker health literacy. With nearly one in five Americans living with mental illness and one in 12 living with addiction—and deaths from suicide and overdose at an all-time high—breaking down barriers to prevention strategies, treatment, and recovery supports should be a top priority for all policymakers.

We are a coalition of stakeholder groups from around the country dedicated to uniting the American people to make systemic, long-term change with civic engagement tools and resources. Check out all of our coalition members here.
Quick Facts about Mental Health and Addiction

Use these statistics in everyday conversations, social media, and brand materials to elevate mental health and addiction in policy conversations.

**PREVALENCE**

- One in five American adults—tens of millions of people—will experience a mental health or substance use disorder in any given year.¹
- The prevalence of any mental illness is higher among women (22.3%) than men (15.1%).²
- Adults reporting two or more races had the highest prevalence of any mental illness (28.6%) followed by White adults (20.4%), Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander adults (19.4%), American Indian/Alaskan Native adults (18.5%), Black adults (16.2%), Hispanic adults (15.2%), and was lowest among Asian adults (14.5%).²
- More than one in four adults living with a serious mental illness also have a substance use disorder.²
- 46% of homeless adults within the U.S. live with severe mental illness and/or substance use disorders.⁵
- The rate of youth with Major Depressive Episodes increased from 11.93% to 12.63% in 2018.³

**ACCESS AND INTERVENTION**

- Less than half of Americans with a mental illness receive treatment.
  - Only 42.6% of adults received mental health services in the past year.¹
  - One in five (nine million) adults experiencing a mental illness still report having an unmet need.¹
    - 62% of youth with major depressive episodes received no treatment.³
- Despite recent efforts, there is a shortage in mental health workforce.
  - In states with the lowest workforce ratio, there are almost four times the number of individuals in need to only one mental health provider.²

**HUMAN AND FINANCIAL COST**

- 47,173 people died by suicide in 2017, making suicide the 10th leading cause of death in the United States.⁴
- Each day, an estimated 17 veterans die by suicide.⁵
- Untreated mental illness costs the country at least $444 billion per year, according to Dr. Thomas Insel, former Director of the National Institute of Mental Health.⁶
- In 2017, over 70,000 people died of overdose, according to the Centers for Disease Control.⁷

**MORE THAN 70,000 AMERICANS die of drug overdose each year**

**46.6 MILLION AMERICANS experience mental illness each year**

**Suicide is the 10TH LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH in the US**

**42% of Americans with mental illness and substance use disorders saw cost and poor insurance coverage as the top barriers for accessing mental health care.**

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Mental Health for US does not participate or intervene in any political campaign for public office.
Talking About Mental Health and Addiction
When speaking about mental health and addiction, don’t use stigmatizing language that perpetuates stereotypes and discriminates against people with these conditions. Always use person-centered language.

Person-centered language is exactly what it sounds like – it focuses on the humanity of a person, rather than their diagnosis. It also means not placing blame or accusations on a person for their mental illness or addiction.

For example:
- Instead of “schizophrenic,” say “person living with schizophrenia”
- Instead of “addict” or “former addict,” say “person living with addiction” or “person in recovery from addiction” or “addiction survivor”
- Instead of “she’s an anorexic,” say “she has anorexia nervosa”
- When discussing suicide, say “died by suicide” rather than “committed suicide.” The word committed implies criminality, whereas suicide is a component of a condition.

For additional tips, check out this resource from the Hogg Foundation.

Policy Platform
When it comes to effectively and holistically addressing mental health and addiction, we know what works—yet we have not made the policy changes and transformative investments that are desperately needed to save lives. The Mental Health for US coalition, comprised of national, state, and local organizational leaders in mental health and addiction, has developed a comprehensive policy platform outlining the key steps our country must take to improve our struggling systems and reduce deaths from suicide and overdose.

Our platform focuses on three main areas:
- **Prevention:** Communities on the local, state, and national levels must unite to foster healthy environments for all Americans that support mental health as a part of overall health.
- **Access and Intervention:** All people with mental illness, including substance use disorders and eating disorders, deserve timely access to affordable treatment and recovery services that treat the mind and the body.
- **Recovery:** Recovery from mental health and substance use disorders is not one-size-fits-all. A wide variety of recovery services, treatments, and support should be available to those who need them.

View the full policy platform [here](#).

We invite you to use any language or suggestions from our policy platform when developing or strengthening your own platform. If you would like more information, please contact us and we can put you in touch with an expert from our coalition membership.
Social Media Content

- There is no health without mental health. Read my plan for improving mental health and addiction care: [link to your policy platform] #MentalHealthForUS
- Suicide deaths, especially among youth and veterans, are on the rise. As policymakers, we have a responsibility to take action. Learn more about my plans for preventing suicide: [link to your policy platform] #MentalHealthForUS
- Our country is in the midst of an addiction crisis. When someone tries to get help, nothing should stand in the way. We must prioritize access to care! [link to your policy platform] #MentalHealthForUS

Graphics

Click to download the following graphics for use on social media, on your website, or anywhere else you’d like to use them.

Making your own graphics? Click here to download the Mental Health for US logos and style guide.
Newsletter Content
Our country is facing a worsening public health crisis. Tens of thousands of Americans are dying from overdose every year. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death across the nation — and is on the rise among youth and Veterans.

[Share your personal thoughts or stories about mental health and addiction to demonstrate why and how you care about these issues.]

I stand with the millions of Americans who are impacted by mental health and addiction. Learn about my mental health and addiction policy platform here [link to your policy platform]. Visit mentalhealthforus.net and use #MentalHealthForUS on social media to join the national conversation.