



ADVOCATING FOR LEGISLATION ON SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

STATE ADVOCACY TOOLKIT



OVERVIEW

An estimated one in 20 Americans has a serious mental illness – a condition that can seriously impact people’s ability to work, build relationships and live independently.

Untreated, these conditions place a heavy burden on patients and their communities. Serious mental illness alone costs the U.S. health care system roughly \$193 billion every year. Patients may not receive care for their condition for any number of reasons – stigma, discrimination, barriers to care.

Treatment options are available for patients with serious mental illness, but accessing and affording these medications can be a challenge. Utilization management tactics often stand between patients and the care they need.

Commonsense policy solutions that limit the overreach of health insurers and expand treatment access are critical for people living with serious mental illness.

ADVOCACY’S IMPACT

Advocates can champion meaningful policy change by guiding state legislators toward solutions. Patients, providers and care partners can advocate for legislation in their statehouses that recognizes and supports people with serious mental illness.

Across the country, more states are taking up bills to limit utilization management and offer support to serious mental illness patients. Advocates must be ready to weigh in, sometimes at a moment’s notice, through public comment, building awareness on social media, or participating in a hearing or briefing.

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This toolkit equips advocates to use their experiences and insights to guide and inform policymakers’ decisions.







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OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The legislative process can vary state to state, but the process typically entails the following steps.

The Process

-  A Bill is Introduced to the State Legislature
-  Bill Referred to Committee
-  Bill Comes to Legislative Body for Vote
-  Bill is Sent to the Second Chamber*
-  Process Repeats in Second Chamber
-  Bill Goes to the Governor's Desk

**Every state's legislature is different. Some have two bodies, while others do not.*

Ways To Get Involved



Sign on to one of AfPA's letters for committees



Submit a comment to committee for consideration



Provide your testimony in front of committee



Spread the word on social media



Submit an op-ed or letter to the editor to your local newspaper



Contact your state representative to offer your opinion

KEY MESSAGES



Patients need access to the full range of treatment options.

- Excessive prior authorization, step therapy and non-medical switching can block patients from getting the care they need.
- Health plans' utilization management must be limited so that red tape does not prevent patients from accessing new treatments.



Helping people with serious mental illness benefits communities and society as a whole.

- People with serious mental illness are more likely to be incarcerated or homeless.
- Serious mental illness alone costs the U.S. health care system roughly \$193 billion every year.
- With treatment, people with serious mental illness are more likely to maintain a job. They are also less likely to experience severe emergency-level crises.



Access to treatments helps minorities and at-risk communities.

- Severe mental illness disproportionately impacts disadvantaged communities, such as minorities.
- Timely access to proper care will help these patients get the care they need.



Advocacy efforts can make a difference by fighting for legislation that limits treatment barriers.

- Legislation passed in favor of patient access will help promote patient-centered care, reduce stigma and ensure that patients receive the care they need.

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE

Hashtags

#SMI

#Advocacy

#MentalHealth

#Patient

#MentalHealthMatters



Tags

You can also tag legislators in posts online to engage with them and show support of a bill.

Tweets / Facebook Messages

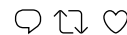
People with [#SMI](#) deserve access to the treatment they need.



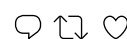
DYK? Utilization management tactics make it harder for patients with [#SMI](#) to access their treatment.



Our state legislators must limit health plan barriers & support patients with [#SMI](#)



1 in 3 people experiencing homelessness have a serious mental illness. Accessible treatment options can help. [#MentalHealthMatters](#)



WHAT'S NEXT?

Serious mental illness can significantly impact a patient's life. Good policy will protect these patients and ensure they have timely treatment access.

Patients and providers deserve a voice in policy decisions on serious mental illness and its treatment.



Look for more information from the Alliance for Patient Access at allianceforpatientaccess.org/SMI



Questions? Contact Payton Marvin at pmarvin@allianceforpatientaccess.org



Alliance for
Patient Access

ABOUT THE ALLIANCE FOR PATIENT ACCESS

The Alliance for Patient Access is a national network of policy-minded health care providers advocating for patient-centered care.



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AllianceforPatientAccess.org