



25. MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT AND THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT BLOCK GRANT

Legislative Issues

Board Strategic Priority:

Ensure Fiscal Responsibility, Promote Good Governance and Increase Organizational Capabilities, Improve Public Safety and Enhance Overall Criminal Justice System

Issue:

There is an increased demand and need for mental health and co-occurring substance use disorder treatment.

Legislative Platform:

1. Support legislation and budgetary proposals to combat the increasing opioid and methamphetamine addiction.
2. Support efforts to amend 42 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 2 to permit information sharing between health care providers.
3. Support efforts to ensure continued Medicaid funding for all forms of substance use disorder treatment.
4. Support efforts to amend the Ryan Haight Act which prohibits the ability of psychiatrists to prescribe medications while utilizing telemedicine.

Background:

The past two years has seen a significant interest by Congress in addressing mental health and related or co-occurring substance abuse issues. Enhanced access to treatment should not be forced on patients; other intensive outreach strategies are effective for many non-compliant patients without involving an overwhelmed justice system.

San Joaquin County supports the continuation of Medicaid funding for all forms of substance use disorder treatment. The County continues to experience significant increases in the number of individuals seeking treatment for methamphetamine, alcohol and opioid addiction.

Due to the stigma associated with Substance Use Disorder, the Federal government enacted extremely strict provisions regarding the privacy of patient treatment records. However, these standards actually impede the care of these patients with co-occurring mental health or physical health issues. Therefore 42 CFR part 2 must be amended in order to provide better health care to these individuals. Patients still must have a say in who may access their medical records; the existence of mental illness or substance use should not be used as justification to access those records without consent.

The Ryan Haight Act of 2008 generally prohibits physicians from prescribing controlled substances without conducting an in-person examination. Changes to this law to allow psychiatrists to utilize telemedicine technology would give Behavioral Health greater ability to recruit and hire permanent and part-time psychiatrists and would provide patients with greater flexibility and access to psychiatry services.

Health Care Services Agency/Behavioral Health Services
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