

Pain Parity for California

Preventing Opioid Use Disorder Before It Begins



Pain is one of the most common reasons people visit their doctor.

Each year, nearly 80 million Americansⁱ seek treatment to manage acute pain symptoms and opioids are often prescribed as a solution. While they can be effective, they can also pose significant health risks and increase chances of opioid dependency.ⁱⁱ

But breakthroughs in pain medication are enabling patients to have a choice in their pain management. Amidst the ongoing opioid epidemic, it is critical that patients have access to the treatments they want and need to address their pain.



Need for increased access to all pain treatment options

- Within one year of receiving an opioid medication to manage acute pain, approximately 85,000 Americans were diagnosed with an opioid use disorder.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Prescribing rates have fallen, but opioid use disorders and overdoses remain high. In 2023, California reported:
 - More than 21,200 opioid-overdose related emergency room visits^{iv}
 - More than 7,800 opioid overdose deaths^v
 - Distributing 238,884 naloxone overdose reversal kits^{vi}
 - 23.8 opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 persons^{vii}
- Furthermore, in California, opioid use disorder cost Medicaid over \$1.77 billion in excess costs in 2022.^{viii}



Pain parity legislation for equal access to pain treatment options

Across the country, states are introducing legislation to expand access to non-opioid treatments and therapies. These policy efforts, often referred to as “pain parity” legislation, address the health insurance barriers many patients face when trying to access non-opioid treatment options. Pain parity legislation ensures patients are not disadvantaged when accessing non-opioid options by:

- Prohibiting the use of utilization controls such as prior authorization and step therapy
- Equalizing cost-sharing for the non-opioid prescription drug and the opioid prescription drug



There is currently no pain parity legislation in California

Contact your representative to let them know California needs pain parity and help prevent addiction before it begins.

www.assembly.ca.gov

Visit www.families-network.org to learn more about Take Control of Pain and the state of pain parity across the U.S.

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vi. CA Bridge. December 2023. Guide to Naloxone Distribution. <https://bridgetotreatment.org/wp-content/uploads/CA-BRIDGE-GUIDE-Guide-to-Naloxone-Distribution-December-20-2023.pdf#:~:text=As%20of%20October%202023%2C%20around%20199%20hospitals,to%20California%20emergency%20departments%20for%20free%20distribution.>

vii. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2024. Opioid Dispensing Rate Maps. <https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/data-research/facts-stats/opioid-dispensing-rate-maps.html>

viii. Health Management Associates. 2025. Opioid Use Disorder in the Medicaid Fee-For-Service Program Economic Analysis. <https://www.healthmanagement.com/wp-content/uploads/Opioid-Use-Disorder-Economic-Impact-on-Medicaid-Program-073125.pdf>

Updated September 2025