

Pain Parity for Wisconsin

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, Wisconsin reported:
 - More than 2,400 opioid-overdose related emergency room visits^{iv}
 - More than 1,421 opioid overdose deaths^v
 - Spending about \$8 million on naloxone^{vi}
 - 32.8 opioid prescriptions per 100 persons^{vii}
- Furthermore, in Wisconsin, opioid use disorder cost Medicaid over \$433 million 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



Pain parity legislation in Wisconsin

A.B. 499 | S.B. 492

Representatives Clint P. Moses (R-92), David Armstrong (R-67), Elijah R. Behnke (R-6), Cindi Duchow (R-97), Rick Gundrum (R-58), Daniel Knodl (R-24), Paul Melotik (R-22), Jeffrey Mursau (R-36), Jerry L. O'Connor (R-60), Chuck Wichgers (R-84), and David Murphy (R-56) and Senators Jesse L. James (R-23), Kristin Dassler-Alfheim (D-18), and Sarah Keyeski (D-14) introduced A.B. 499 and S.B. 492, legislation that aims to increase access to non-opioid pain treatment options by:

- Requiring health insurers to cover for at least two FDA-approved non-opioid prescription medication treatment options and three alternative nonpharmacological treatment modalities
- Prohibiting utilization controls that are more restrictive or extensive than those for opioids
- Requiring health insurers to provide information about the pain management access plan to enrollees and health care providers and to make the plan available on its website

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

<https://legis.wisconsin.gov/>

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

i. Lopez A, et al. An evaluation of the prevalence of acute and chronic pain medication use in the United States: a real-world database analysis. Presented at: ASRA Annual Pain Medicine Meeting; November 10-11, 2023; New Orleans, LA.

ii. Dydyk AM, Jain NK, Gupta M. Opioid Use Disorder: Evaluation and Management; January 17, 2024; In: StatPearls. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK553166/>

iii. Schoenfeld AJ, et al. An Evaluation of the Incidence of Opioid Use Disorder Among People with Acute and Chronic Pain Managed with Prescription Opioids and the Associated Economic and Societal Burden in the United States. Presented at PAINWeek 2024, Las Vegas, NV.

iv. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2025. Dose-DIS Dashboard: Nonfatal Overdose Emergency Department and Inpatient Hospitalization Discharge Data. <https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/data-research/facts-stats/dose-dashboard-nonfatal-discharge-data.html>

v. KFF. 2023. Opioid Overdose Deaths and Opioid Overdose Deaths as a Percent of All Drug Overdose Deaths. <https://www.kff.org/mental-health/state-indicator/opioid-overdose-deaths/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>

vi. National Public Radio. 2023. “In 2023, opioid settlement funds flowed to states. Here’s how it’s going.” <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2023/12/21/1220692018/in-2023-opioid-settlement-funds-started-being-paid-out-heres-how-its-going>

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>

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