

Pain Parity for Arizona

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, Arizona reported:
 - More than 3,700 opioid-overdose related emergency room visits^{iv}
 - More than 1,950 opioid overdose deaths^v
 - More than 3.8 million opioid prescriptions dispensed to individuals^{vi}
 - Nearly 6,000 administrations of naloxone by emergency medical services^{vi}
- Furthermore, in Arizona, opioid use disorder cost Medicaid over \$119 million in excess costs in 2022.^{vii}



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 Arizona

In Arizona there is important legislation focused on pain parity to help patients and families.

H.B. 2725

State Representatives Selina Bliss (R-1), Cesar Aguilar (D-26), Junelle Cavero (D-11), Alma Hernandez (D-20), Consuelo Hernandez (D-21), Michele Pena (R-23), Julie Wiloughby (R-13) and State Senators John Kavanaugh (R-3), and Kevin Payne (R-27) introduced legislation that aims to increase access to non-opioid pain medications by:

- Amending Arizona’s Medicaid program to prohibit health plans from substituting an opioid when a physician prescribes a non-opioid drug for pain treatment
- Prohibiting the state from imposing more restrictive utilization controls, like prior authorization or step therapy, on non-opioid medications

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

www.azleg.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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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. Arizona Prescription Monitoring Program. 2024. Arizona Controlled Substances Prescription Monitoring Program (CSPMP) Annual Report 2024. <https://pharmacypmp.az.gov/resources/arizona-controlled-substances-prescription-monitoring-program-cspmp-annual-report-2024>

vii. 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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