

Pain Parity for Colorado

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 2022, Colorado reported:
 - More than 2,900 opioid-overdose related emergency room visits^{iv}
 - More than 1,200 opioid overdose deaths^v
 - A dispensing rate of 32.4 opioid prescriptions per 100 persons^{vi}
 - An increase in opioid overdose deaths^{vii}
- Furthermore, in Colorado, opioid use disorder cost Medicaid over \$493 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 Colorado

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

S.B. 26-006

State Senators Judy Amabile (D-18), Dafna Michaelson Jenet (D-21) and Representative Kyle Brown (D-12) introduced S.B. 26-006, a bill that requires health insurers and Colorado Medicaid to treat FDA-approved non-opioid pain medications at least as favorably as opioids by limiting prior authorization and step therapy, ensuring non-opioid alternatives are available, and prohibiting higher cost-sharing. It aims to promote non-opioid pain management by removing financial and administrative barriers.

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

<https://leg.colorado.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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