

Pain Parity for Massachusetts

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, Massachusetts reported:
 - More than 10,000 opioid overdose related emergency room visits^{iv}
 - More than 2,100 opioid overdose deaths, 88% of all drug overdose deaths^v
 - 28.6 opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 persons^{vi}
 - 0.6 naloxone doses distributed per 100 persons^{vii}
- Furthermore, in Massachusetts, opioid use disorder cost Medicaid over \$1.18 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



Pain parity legislation in Massachusetts

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

H. 1134 | S. 863

State Representative Marjorie Decker (D-25) and Senator Dylan Fernandes (D-Plymouth and Barnstable) introduced H.1134 and S.863, legislation that aims to increase access to non-opioid treatments by:

- Requiring MassHealth (Medicaid) and its contracted plans to cover FDA-approved non-opioid pain medications on parity with opioids by prohibiting more restrictive coverage, prior authorization, or step therapy requirements
- Expanding Medicaid chronic pain care through integrated services, quality strategies, provider training, and statewide data collection and reporting on chronic pain prevalence and costs

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

<https://malegislature.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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ii. Dydik 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. Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA). 2025. Emergency Department Database (EDD Reporting). <https://www.chiamass.gov/emergency-department-database-edd-reporting>

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. 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>

vii. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2024. Naloxone Dispensing Rate Maps. <https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/data-research/facts-stats/naloxone-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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