

# Pain Parity for Virginia

## Preventing Opioid Use Disorder Before It Begins



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

Each year, nearly 80 million Americans<sup>i</sup> 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.<sup>ii</sup>

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.<sup>iii</sup>
- Prescribing rates have fallen, but opioid use disorders and overdoses remain high. In 2023, Virginia reported:
  - Over 11,500 opioid overdose related emergency department visits<sup>iv</sup>
  - More than 2,000 opioid overdose deaths<sup>v</sup>
  - 32.5 opioid prescriptions dispensed per 100 persons<sup>vi</sup>
  - 0.8 naloxone doses distributed per 100 persons<sup>vii</sup>
- Furthermore, in Virginia, opioid use disorder cost Medicaid over \$776 million in excess costs in 2022.<sup>viii</sup>



#### 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 Virginia

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

##### H.B. 516

State delegate Marty Martinez (D-29) introduced H.B. 516, legislation that prohibits commercial health insurers from imposing limitations or utilization controls on coverage of a covered FDA-approved non-opioid drug that are more restrictive or less favorable to the enrollee relative to the coverage of an opioid drug for the treatment or management of pain.

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

<https://virginiageneralassembly.gov/>

Visit [www.families-network.org](http://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. Virginia Department of Health. 2025. ED Visits for Drug Overdose. <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/syndromic-surveillance/drug-overdose-surveillance/>

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%22colld%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>

Updated February 2026