



MEMORANDUM

To: All Clients

From: Center Road Solutions

Date: March 23rd, 2022

On March 23rd, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (HELP) held a hearing titled [“Strengthening Federal Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Programs: Opportunities, Challenges, and Emerging Issues.”](#) The hearing focused on the growing mental health crisis in the United States, including the increase in substance use disorders, and what Congress can do to support efforts to address this crisis and reduce challenges.

Opening Statements:

Chairwoman Representative Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) (no written testimony)

- COVID-19 has made it clearer than ever that we need to be doing much more to support our communities.
- We saw a record high of 106,000 deaths due to substance abuse disorder in one year during the pandemic.
- Over 130 million Americans live in areas where there is less than 1 mental health provider per 100 people.

Ranking Member Senator Richard Burr (R-NC) (no written testimony)

- In 2020 alone the number of young people admitted to the emergency room for mental health increased by 31%.
- Two-thirds of the deaths caused by drug overdoses last year were linked to synthetic opioids like fentanyl.
- Since 2016 we have authorized or reauthorized over 40 federal programs to support mental health and substance use disorders.

Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Rockville, MD ([written testimony](#))

- Two out of five adults report symptoms of anxiety or depression and minoritized communities are disproportionately undertreated.
- Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States, with 45,979 deaths in 2020. This is about one death every 11 minutes. The number of people who think about or attempt suicide is even higher.

Carole Johnson Administrator, Health Resources and Services Administration, Rockville, MD ([written testimony](#))

- Two of HRSA’s mental health programs are currently up for reauthorization: The Screening and Treatment for Maternal Depression and Related Behavioral Disorders Program and The Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program.
- Research also shows that maternal mental health conditions are the most common complications of pregnancy. About 1 in 8 women experience symptoms of postpartum depression.
- Only 75 percent of mothers who need treatment are finding and getting it. Without treatment, mothers are at increased risk for a range of poor outcomes.

Joshua A. Gordon, M.D., Ph.D., Director, National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health Bethesda, MD. ([written testimony](#))

- This translational pathway from basic science to clinical application is well illustrated by considering one recent advance in the treatment of postpartum depression (PPD), a mental illness that impacts 1 in 9 mothers and can be life-threatening.
- A study in adults showed that emergency room screening combined with brief interventions and follow-up contacts can reduce suicide attempts by 33 percent.
- The demand for mental health services has also increased, especially amongst children. And the effects on our youth, though still not fully quantified, are substantial.

Nora D. Volkow, M.D., Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD ([written testimony](#))

- Substance use disorders (SUDs) are considered mental illnesses, and these conditions frequently co-occur with other mental illnesses including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and others. Half of the people with mental illnesses will have a SUD at some point in their lives, and the reverse is also true.
- Genes play a role between drug use and mental illness but common risk factors also include social detriments of health like discrimination, racism, childhood trauma, economic deprivation, and lack of healthcare access.

Senator Patty Murray (D-WA)

“How would improved access to treatment, including medication-assisted treatment, help reduce disparities?”

Dr. Volkow: We know that medicated assisted treatment is one of the most important ways to help reduce drug overdoses and death, but these services are not available to everybody. We need to ensure that the workforce can provide treatment and that treatment is more accessible.

Senator Tina Smith (D-MN)

“Can you talk about some of the models out there to include integration of behavioral and mental health into primary care settings?”

Dr. Delphin-Rittmon: We have a program called PBHTCI that integrates behavioral and mental health into primary care settings. If screening can be done in that setting, it fast tracks people being connected to those services quicker.

Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

“Can you speak on whether or not there are opportunities for the Suicide Prevention Resources Center to collab with DOD to address suicide issues in our military and veterans?”

Dr. Delphin-Rittmon: I think there definitely are opportunities there. This is one of the issues we are looking at and it’s an ongoing collaboration with several agencies.

Senator Maggie Hassan (D-MA)

“What barriers have you seen to a federally coordinated maternal mental health response?”

Dr. Volkow: There are challenges to screening and treating women before they get pregnant for S.U.D as substance use can be detrimental to both the mother and the infant. Data shows that pregnancy is the time that women are much more likely to be receptive to treatment and not having the opportunity is a huge loss.

Dr. Gordon: ensuring that maternal health care providers have training and expertise needed - expanding care.