



Preventing Mental Health and Substance Use Crises During Emergencies Act

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Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the existing mental health and substance use crisis in the United States. Americans are feeling the strain of job loss, school closures, economic uncertainty, and social isolation. These stressors are driving a nationwide increase in mental health conditions and substance use.

A recent study uncovered troubling trends, including increases in anxiety, depression, and substance use. Individuals working remotely during the pandemic are exhibiting higher rates of burnout and adverse mental health impacts. Essential workers are reporting higher rates of substance use and suicidal thoughts due to the heightened risk of exposure to COVID-19. Health care workers are struggling with resource and staffing shortages and are at increased risk of post-traumatic stress, insomnia, and suicidal ideation¹.

The COVID-19 pandemic will not be the last public health emergency to impact our country. This bill would ensure the federal government is properly prepared to address the mental health and substance use impacts of the next public health emergency.

About the Legislation

The “Preventing Mental Health and Substance Use Crises During Emergencies Act” would:

- Direct HHS to convene a task force to assess the federal government's response to mental health and substance use crises during and after the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- Create a national strategy to prevent future mental health and substance use crises during public health emergencies
- Periodically reconvene the task force to keep the national strategy up to date with current technologies and best practices.

¹ Kaiser Family Foundation, “Both Remote and On-Site Workers are Grappling with Serious Mental Health Consequences of COVID-19” (Dec. 2020). Available at [Both Remote and On-Site Workers are Grappling with Serious Mental Health Consequences of COVID-19 | KFF](#)