



#FSSAA2021 Campaign Toolkit

Addressing the Addiction Crisis in the U.S.: Investing
in Support Systems for Addiction

The Environmental Justice Coalition

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Background

With the COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying uncertainty and stress, people's mental health declined. Communities of color, young adults, mothers and children, essential workers, and unemployed people were the most vulnerable to this phenomenon. As a result, a rise in substance use has been seen throughout the pandemic. Addiction is a mental disorder that causes people to continue to use a substance, such as alcohol or drugs, regardless of the negative effects. Many people with addiction struggle with mental health illnesses with about 50% of people with a severe mental illness having a substance use disorder (SUD) (Help Guide, 2020). Those with mental health issues use alcohol and drugs as self-medication, which they eventually become addicted to. Individuals with addiction become dependent on the addictive substance because it gives them feelings of greatness and invincibility. However, as this feeling becomes increasingly more fleeting, the user must take more and more of the substance until eventually they need it just to function in their day-to-day life. In June 2020, 13% of adults (ages 25 and up) and 25% of young adults (ages 18-24) in the United States had begun or increased substance use (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021). Stressors, such as unemployment, isolation, and loss, have strained many vulnerable communities, including essential workers and Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), who experience high COVID-19 infection and mortality rates. To elaborate, BIPOC individuals are in need of attention and support for addiction as many of these communities face job loss, lost health insurance, financial instability, and more. Black families' net worth is typically 10 times less than whites families (Psychiatric Times, 2020), which makes it ever harder to manage these challenges and pushes many to begin substance use. Moreover, essential workers, many of whom are a part of the BIPOC community, experience deaths of families and community members, which can add to stress. Additionally, social and economic changes that occurred during the pandemic, such as job loss and isolation, have furthered those who already had substance use disorder dependency on their addiction and made it more difficult for them to get help. Meanwhile, many facilities and programs designed to support and guide people struggling with this condition have become harder to access after the pandemic caused many facilities to lose funding and restrictions have forced many of them to limit the amount of people they are allowed to care for at a time when an increasing number of individuals are in need of support. According to a National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers' survey, 43% of addiction facilities had to reduce capacity, almost a third experienced a drop in patient retention, and 10% had to close (New York Times, 2021). Support services that offer resources, education, and treatment for substance use disorder (SUD) are vital given individuals with SUD need a strong support system during this time of isolation and mortality rates due to overdose are on the rise. Overdose deaths have been on the rise since 2019, but their rates accelerated during the pandemic with over 81,000 overdose deaths recorded in the 12-month period ending in May 2020 (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020). Support services and community are a necessity for numerous people across the United States who experience addiction:

- SUDs affect over 20 million Americans aged 12 and up (National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics, 2021)
- The U.S spent almost \$272 billion in 2017 as a result of drug abuse

This toolkit will help explain and contextualize the Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2021 and provide resources for you to help it get passed.

Summary of Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2021

The Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2021 addresses the need for well-funded support services for people struggling with substance use disorder and their families, including offering education on and treatment for substance use disorder, and building connections between support networks.

Details of Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2021

The Family Support Services for Addiction Act was introduced by Representative David J. Trone (D-MD-6) in the House of Representatives on January 21, 2021 in the first session of the 117th congress as H.R. 433. Its purpose is “to establish a grant program for family community organizations that provide support for individuals struggling with substance use disorder and their families.” The bill is in the second stage of the legislative process.

The bill lays out a thorough course of action to fund community organizations that support individuals with substance use disorder and their loved ones. The Secretary of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will give grants to programs that aim to create, expand, and strengthen evidence-informed family support services. These grants must be used for particular activities and initiatives, including informing services providers such as behavioral health and primary care providers about addiction and the family, educating others on substance use disorder to encourage compassionate support and reduce a stigma, connecting families with peer support groups, and training on how to prevent and live with addiction as well as other activities. The Secretary will be given data by the organization no more than 90 days after the end of the first year of the grant period and then annually that details the activities and initiatives funded by the grant, the health outcome of patients with substance use disorder that participated in activities funded by the grant, and any other information the Secretary requires. In total, \$5,000,000 can be awarded to organizations each year from 2022 to 2026.

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/433>

Templates to Contact Legislators about Supporting the Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2021

How to Find Your Representatives and Senators

To locate your state's US representative's website and contact information, click on the link here: <https://www.house.gov/representatives>. Search for your state and congressional district. If you do not know your congressional district, you can enter your ZIP code and find your representative here: <https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>. Remember that each state has a varying number of representatives based on the state's population.

To locate your state's Senator's website and contact information, click on the link here: <https://www.senate.gov/senators/senators-contact.htm>. Select your state from the "Choose a state" drop-down menu. Remember that each state has only two senators.

Email Template

Copy the email template below and enter all of the information that pertains to you and your state in the bracketed portions of the text.

Dear [Title] [Last Name],

My name is [Name], and I am emailing you to ask for your support of the Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2021 and to consider cosponsoring the act in Congress if you have not already. According to Partnership to End Addiction, 23 million Americans are addicted to alcohol or drugs, but only one in every ten of them receive assistance. This has created a treatment gap of approximately 20 million people who are in need of help. Most notably, young adults, BIPOC and POC communities, and essential workers are in most need of treatment after ongoing stressors, such as unemployment and loss, have fathered or led to substance use disorder among these individuals. In total, 13% of adult Americans and 25% of young adult Americans aged 18 to 24 have begun or increased substance use.

With your support of the bill, proper, education-based care and a support system can be available to those with addictions and substance use disorder.

Thank you in advance for your time, consideration, and support of the Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2021.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Phone Template

When gathering the contact information about your House Representative and Senator, note down their office's cell phone number, which can be used to call them. If you choose to call, you can use the phone calling template below to speak to their office and arrange a meeting with your House Representative or Senator.

Hello, my name is [insert your name], and I am a constituent from [insert congressional district or city and state]. I am calling to ask [senator or representative's name] to support the Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2021. Out of the 23 million Americans addicted to drugs or alcohol, only one in every 10 receive the services they need. During this pandemic, the situation has only worsened and many support systems for addiction have been lost due to funding and COVID-restrictions. As a result of pandemic-related stressors, including financial insecurities and isolation, those already suffering from substance use disorder have furthered their addiction and many vulnerable and underrepresented communities, including BIPOC communities and essential workers, have also experienced higher substance use rates. Overall, 13% of adult Americans have begun or increased substance use.

Please vote in favor of passing the Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2021 to the next stage in the legislative process. Thank you for your time, consideration, and commitment to those struggling in the U.S.

Other Ways to Support the Family Support Services for Addiction Act of 2021

Petitions to Sign

- “Changing the Language Around Substance Use Disorder”
<https://www.change.org/p/journalists-changing-the-language-around-substance-use-disorder>
- “Anthony’s Act - Providing Those Suffering with Addiction a Real Chance at Recovery”
<https://sign.moveon.org/petitions/anthonys-act>

Places to Donate

- Amy Winehouse Foundation <https://amywinehousefoundation.org/support-our-work/>
- The Herren Project
<https://theherrenproject.networkforgood.com/projects/134024-the-empowerment-appeal>
- Partnership to End Addiction
https://act.drugfree.org/site/Donation2.jsessionid=00000000.app30116b?df_id=2360&2360.donation=form1&mfc_pref=T&NONCE_TOKEN=D1624D3ED84AFE200D8EAF54128E6BF9
- The Brent Shapiro Foundation <https://www.brentshapiro.org/donations/>
- Shatterproof
<https://fundraise.shatterproof.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=donate.event&eventID=541&referrer=2021Nav>
- Angels at Risk https://angelsatrisk.com/?page_id=4635
- Phoenix House <https://www.phoenixhouse.org/>

Support Services for Addiction to Volunteer With

- Faces and Voices of Recovery
- Adult and Teen Challenge
- MARR Addiction Treatment Centers
- Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation

Videos to Learn More about Addiction

- “The Best Explanation of Addiction I’ve Ever Heard - Dr. Gabor Maté”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ys6TCO_olOc
- “Living with Addiction” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQALMZbZ8Tk>
- “Addiction and the Brain - For Kids!” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0bqT_hxMwI
- “Substance Use Disorders” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPhcRBkVmUM>

- “People Share Their Experience With Substance Abuse”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHF-9LWllb4>
- “Hooked, Hacked, Hijacked: Reclaim your brain from addictive living”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqhzFd4NUPI>

Helpful Reports to Read about Addiction

- “Ask the Experts - How Do I Help a Loved One Struggling with Addiction”
<https://www.guardianrecoverynetwork.com/addiction-recovery-resources-for-families/ask-the-experts-how-to-help-a-family-member-struggling-with-addiction/>
- “Crises Fueling Crises: The Effect of COVID-19 on the Opioid Epidemic”
<https://www.hcplive.com/view/crises-fueling-crises-effect-covid-19-opioid-epidemic>
- “What is Drug Addiction”
<https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/addiction/drug-abuse-addiction#1>
- “Tell Me Everything I Need to Know About Addiction”
<https://www.psych.com/addiction-substance-abuse>
- “Long-Term Strategies for Overcoming Addiction”
<https://www.verywellmind.com/overcoming-addiction-4157285>
- “The State of Addiction and Recovery in the Age of COVID-19”
<https://www.pinegrovetreatment.com/blog/2021/02/addiction-covid-19-isolation/>
- “Substance Use Disorders and COVID-19: Multi-Faceted Problems Which Require Multi-Pronged Solutions”
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsy.2020.00714/full>

Get Involved with the Environmental Justice Coalition

The Environmental Justice Coalition is the first grassroots, youth-led movement mobilizing the next generation of activists in the fight for intersectional environmental justice and uplifting BIPOC, low-income, and marginalized communities most impacted by environmental racism and injustices through political advocacy, policy development, community organizing, educational initiatives, and content creation. We are working towards a future in which there is fair and equal treatment, equitable distribution of resources, and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexuality, or income level in the development, implementation, and enforcement of sustainable environmental laws, regulations, and policies on the local, state, and federal level.

For position descriptions, eligibility requirements, sample projects, and application forms, please visit our [Job Board](#) to learn more about joining our executive team, enrolling in our fellowship program, or becoming a staff writer and reach out to team@environmentaljusticecoalition.org with any questions!

Follow the Movement

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Medium: medium.com/environmental-justice-coalition

Twitter: [@envjustco](#)

Linktree: linktr.ee/environmentaljusticecoalition

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Melinda. Dual Diagnosis: Substance Abuse and Mental Health. (2021, July 8). Retrieved from www.helpguide.org/articles/addictions/substance-abuse-and-mental-health.htm

Mental Health Disparities Among Black Americans During the COVID-19 Pandemic. Retrieved

from

www.psychiatrytimes.com/view/mental-health-disparities-among-black-americans-during-covid-19-pandemic

Addiction Is a Public Health Crisis

www.shatterproof.org/learn/addiction-basics/addiction-in-america