



**Maryland Chapter  
National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence  
2021 Public Policy Agenda**

The 2021 Maryland General Assembly Session will be like none before it because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of its work will be conducted virtually, with limitations to public access and participation. The budget outlook for the state is poor as revenue projections are significantly lower due to the impact of the pandemic on the economy and employment. It is in this situation, with both federal and state emergency declarations still in place, that NCADD-Maryland presents its policy priorities for 2021.

**Funding**

NCADD-Maryland will oppose attempts to reduce public investment in substance use disorder treatment, prevention and recovery support services in the proposed FY 2022 budget.

- Oppose reduction or elimination of increases in reimbursement rates to community-based behavioral health programs as provided for in the Fight for Fifteen minimum wage law;
- Advocate for a continuum of care for young people including residential SUD treatment for adolescents; and
- Advocate for a comprehensive recovery support system, including funding from increasing the alcoholic beverage tax as proposed in an effort also intended to address health disparities by creating Health Equity Resource Communities.

**Racial Disparities**

NCADD-Maryland will support efforts to address health disparities that plague Black and Brown communities. Recent data from the Opioid Operational Command Center shows a significant increase in overdose fatalities among Black Marylanders. Policy and funding proposals that are aimed at addressing inequities will be supported, and all proposals will be examined through a racial equity lens.

**Behavioral Health System of Care**

NCADD-Maryland will continue to be engaged in the work to redesign the State's public behavioral health system. NCADD-Maryland will advocate for access to a full continuum of high quality, Parity compliant treatment and recovery services in a variety of ways:

- Advocating for fixing the operations of or replacing the current administrative service organization (ASO); and
- Advocating for passage of any legislation that removes barriers to treatment for those with opioid and other substance use disorders.

## **Parity Compliance**

NCADD-Maryland will support the Maryland Parity at 10 Coalition's efforts to ensure private insurance carriers and Maryland's Medicaid program comply with the federal Parity Act.

- Support legislation to maintain expansions to telehealth past the current public health emergencies;
- Support legislation that incentivizes insurance carriers to meet network adequacy requirements; and
- Support implementation of 2020 legislation that passed mandating Parity compliance reporting.

## **Harm Reduction**

NCADD-Maryland is supportive of harm reduction strategies that assist individuals who use substances to be safer and to make organizations and systems less harmful. NCADD-Maryland will:

- Lead efforts to strengthen the State's existing Good Samaritan law; and
- Support legislation to create overdose prevention sites.

## **Decriminalization**

NCADD-Maryland will support efforts to end the criminalization of people who use drugs and the over-incarceration of people of color. Specifically, NCADD-Maryland will:

- Support proposals to decriminalize drug and paraphernalia possession, including efforts led by the Harm Reduction Coalition, the People's Commission to Decriminalize Maryland, and the ACLU of Maryland.

## **Recovery Support**

NCADD-Maryland will work to strengthen the state's recovery supports, including those dealing with recovery residences and the collateral consequences from involvement in the criminal justice.

- Working closely with the Behavioral Health Advisory Committee to make sure people in need of recovery residences have access to high quality housing;
- Ensure that efforts to fix the ASO failure include the concerns and needs of recovery residences and other services funded with Maryland RecoveryNet dollars; and
- Continuing to support efforts to ensure an adequate pipeline of qualified certified and licensed providers is created, including Certified Peer Recovery Specialists and counselors.

## **Treatment Behind the Walls**

NCADD-Maryland will advocate for greater access to substance use disorder and mental health treatment for people who are in Maryland's jails and prisons by:

- Actively participating in the implementation of legislation that requires local detention centers to provide access to medication assisted treatment for people with opioid use disorders; and
- Support access to treatment for people in the state prison system.

## **Problem Gambling**

NCADD-Maryland will continue to work with its partners dealing with problem gambling to direct funding to treatment and evaluate proposal regarding expanding legalized gaming. NCADD-Maryland will support efforts to include certain protections in legislation to implement recently legalized sports betting.

## **Fighting Stigma**

NCADD-Maryland will work to defeat all proposals that perpetuate the stigma against people with substance use and mental health disorders, against quality treatment programs in the community, and against people's choices regarding the kind of clinical treatment they choose, including treatment assisted with all medications.