

Improving Access to Comprehensive Mental Health and Substance Use Care

BOTTOM LINE



Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) are proven to improve access to high-quality mental health and substance use care. Making it possible for more communities to establish a CCBHC will ensure more people can access lifesaving care, including crisis care, when and where they need it.

THE ASK



Cosponsor and support passage of the Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act.

Passing this will build upon previous bipartisan congressional action and create the infrastructure required to sustain and expand access to CCBHCs nationwide. CCBHCs have enjoyed strong bipartisan support throughout multiple presidential administrations and congresses over the past decade. Most recently, level funding for CCBHC expansion grants was included in budget proposals for FY26.

WHY WE NEED THIS LEGISLATION

CCBHCs were established by Congress in 2014 and launched through a demonstration program in 2017, later expanded by two states in 2020. The 2022 Bipartisan Safer Communities Act expanded the demonstration program to add 10 new states every two years until 2032. Let's continue to build upon this momentum and set this innovative model up for the future to help more communities access high-quality mental health and substance use care.

The Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act would:

- **Establish CCBHCs under the Medicare program.** Establishing CCBHCs in Medicare will allow them comparable status and designated payment as other safety net health care providers. While CCBHCs serve Medicare beneficiaries, establishing designated payment for CCBHCs under Medicare will also improve workforce sustainability and foster the same outcome quality measures as demonstrated under CCBHCs in Medicaid.
- **Solidify PPS for CCBHCS in Medicaid.** The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (H.R.4366) codified a permanent CCBHC option for states under the Medicaid program. To ensure continued support for the CCBHC Medicaid option, now we need to codify the Prospective Payment System that goes along with this Medicaid definition so clinics can continue to perpetuate their successful outcomes.

- **Authorize CCBHC-Expansion grants** at a level that allows all current grantees to continue their efforts and ensures availability of technical assistance to help the grantee clinics succeed.
- **Create opportunities to better integrate physical and behavioral health care** by giving CCBHCs the option to offer additional primary care services within their Prospective Payment System (PPS).
- **Further enhance the strong accountability measures for CCBHCs** by establishing a national data infrastructure and repository, like the Federally Qualified Health Center Uniform Data System, that would expand the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and Congress' ability to track program progress and outcomes.

CCBHCs are making a difference — Ensuring Excellence in Mental Health Act ensures they'll be able to continue doing so. Today, more than 500 CCBHCs across 48 states and territories (covering 40% of all U.S. counties) serve an estimated 3 million people nationwide. Key findings from across the U.S. include:¹

- **Improved access to services.** CCBHCs report a 33% increase in the number of individuals served.
 - 60% of CCBHCs report the number of individuals engaged in medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder has increased since becoming a CCBHC.
 - Over 80% of CCBHCs have expanded programs to reach veterans and people experiencing homelessness.
- **Timely connection to care.** More than 80% of CCBHCs see clients for routine needs within 10 days of the initial call or referral, in contrast to the national average of 48 days.
 - CCBHCs decreased emergency room visits by 55%, reduced mental health care hospitalization by 55% and decreased homelessness measured in the previous 30 days by 31%.
- **Strengthened behavioral health workforce.** Through the PPS, CCBHCs have reported increased hiring, adding a median of 22 new positions per clinic.

¹ <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/program/ccbhc-success-center/ccbhc-overview/ccbhc-data-impact/>