Top 6 for the 46th

Eating Disorders Transition Memo for the Biden-Harris Administration
ABOUT

Established in 2000, the Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) is a nonprofit organization comprised of patient and caregiver advocates, treatment providers, advocacy organizations, and academics, aimed to advance the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the United States. By promoting federal support for improved access to care, the EDC seeks to increase the resources available for education, prevention, and improved training, as well as for scientific research on the etiology, prevention, and treatment of eating disorders.
EATING DISORDERS 101

Eating disorders are one of the most serious mental illnesses affecting Americans today. With 10,200 deaths per year, or 1 death every 52 minutes, this psychiatric illness has a case-fatality rate second only to opioid use disorder. Eating disorders affect people of all ages, races, body sizes, gender identities, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. Females are twice as likely as males to have an eating disorder, and people of color with eating disorders are half as likely as their white peers to be diagnosed or receive treatment for an eating disorder. The cost of untreated eating disorders is significant; costing the U.S. economy $64.7 billion annually, with individuals and families absorbing $23.5 billion of these costs. Although these statistics are alarming, the majority of deaths attributable to eating disorders are preventable with early recognition and treatment.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to exacerbate eating disorders symptoms for Americans across the country. In a recent study, researchers found that the pandemic led to an increase in eating disorder behaviors, with increased restrictive behavior in those with anorexia, increased binge eating behaviors among those with bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder, and overall fear of relapse for all eating disorder types.

OBAMA-BIDEN ADMINISTRATION: Passage of Anna Westin Act Provisions

The Obama-Biden Administration signed into law provisions from the Anna Westin Act, as part of the 21st Century Cures Act (P.L. 114-255), marking the first time in history the federal government passed legislation centered directly on those with eating disorders. This bill authorized early identification and intervention trainings for health professionals under HHS, communications initiatives to increase eating disorders awareness, and clarified coverage of eating disorders at all levels of care under mental health parity.
6 Items The Biden-Harris Administration Can Accomplish in Year 1
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ESTABLISH A WHITE HOUSE COMMISSION ON EATING DISORDERS

The 45th Administration, under the authorization of the Anna Westin Act, established an informal interdepartmental working group under the leadership of the HHS’ Office on Women’s Health, which began enhancing collaboration between agencies. This collaboration included a 2019 convening entitled, “How to Talk About Healthy Weight and Healthy Eating: A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on Messaging to Promote Healthy Behaviors and Positive Body Image” to foster collaboration between subject matter experts in obesity and eating disorders. However, a dedicated commitment to address the severity of this mental illness is warranted.

Request: We request the Administration establish a Commission on Eating Disorders to detail short- and long-term recommendations to strengthen eating disorders research, awareness, prevention, intervention, and treatment including solutions to address health disparities in both the public and private sectors. We recommend the Commission include interagency leadership including the HHS’ HRSA, SAMHSA, CDC, CMS, FDA, IHS, and NIH; DoD’s Defense Health Agency and U.S. Army Medical Research & Development Command, DOL’s Employee Benefits Services Administration, USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service, DoED’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Postsecondary Education, the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Veterans Health Administration and Veterans Benefits Administration, DOJ’s Office of Justice Programs, and Department of Commerce’s FCC.
Research shows that military members and their families experience eating disorders at higher rates than the civilian population. However, a recent report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) showed that the Department of Defense (DoD) lacked screenings for eating disorders and provided inadequate access to eating disorders care, with TRICARE contracting in-network with only 21% of available care in the nation. The Defense Health Board recently released similar findings, showing that active duty women experience higher rates of eating disorders and that the DoD has significant variability in screening, which adversely affects readiness and health. Additionally, current Defense Health Agency (DHA) policy does not permit military family members over the age of 20 years old to receive higher levels of eating disorders care, such as residential treatment, whereas such treatment is available for military families experiencing substance use disorder. As a product of the bipartisan SERVE Act, the Senate’s report within the Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), encouraged the Administration to address several of these issues, including expanding care for military family members over the age of 20 (as is permitted for substance use disorder), ensuring network adequacy for eating disorders care at all levels, and training Commanding Officers and Supervisory Personnel to identify the early warning signs of all mental illnesses, including eating disorders.

Request: We request that the Administration enact the provisions requested by the Senate NDAA to allow military members and their families receive eating disorders care, regardless of age.
THE WHITE HOUSE GOES LILAC FOR WORLD EATING DISORDER ACTION DAY

The Biden-Harris Administration can take part in World Eating Disorder Action Day on June 2, 2021 by issuing a Presidential Proclamation commemorating this day. Additional efforts to combat stigma and raise awareness for eating disorders would be to light up the White House in the color lilac, the official awareness color for eating disorders.

Request: We request the Administration issue a Presidential Proclamation honoring World Eating Disorder Action Day, including a lilac lighting commemoration.
The provisions of the Anna Westin Act within the 21st Century Cures authorized eating disorders early identification training for health professionals, leading to the creation of HHS’ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders. The mission of the Center is to advance education and training for healthcare providers on eating disorders treatment and promote public awareness of eating disorders. Since the Center’s opening in 2018, the Center continues to equip healthcare providers with evidence-based interventions for eating disorders and a resource library for individuals, families, loved ones, and treatment providers. Additionally, the Committee report within the FY2019, and FY2021 appropriations package urges integration of eating disorders training within the Health Resources and Services Administration’s (HRSA) Primary Care Training & Enhancement grants, however, the 45th Administration never implemented.

Request: We request the Administration to 1) Increase funding for the National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders; 2) Facilitate cross-agency collaboration to integrate early identification trainings within HRSA’s Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the Primary Care Training and Enhancement Grant Program and; 3) Improve coordination with other SAMHSA Centers of Excellence to address the intersection of eating disorders and health disparities.

https://www.eatingdisorderscoalition.org  https://www.facebook.com/EatingDisordersCoalition @EDCoalition1 @EDCoalition
5 RESUME PUBLIC HEALTH SURVEILLANCE OF EATING DISORDERS UNDER THE CDC

From 1991-2013 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) included questions on disordered eating behaviors. In 2015, all these questions were removed from the survey despite a study finding harmful weight control behaviors, such as diet pill use, fasting, vomiting, and laxative use remained persistent, and racial disparities in the prevalence of these behaviors showed no improvement between 1999-2013. YRBSS provides the nation the opportunity to track, assess, and identify community-level trends for public health so we can best address prevention efforts for populations at risk. Congress has requested this re-inclusion within the past three appropriations packages including FY2019, FY2020, and FY2021, however, the 45th Administration has not implemented.

Request: We request the Administration to resume data collection on disordered eating behaviors within the CDC’s YRBSS survey and integrate these questions within the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) to enable public health experts to track eating disorders throughout the life course.
Despite the passage and implementation of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (P.L. 110-343) under the Obama Administration, Americans affected by eating disorders still face significant challenges in receiving comprehensive eating disorders care at medically recommended lengths and levels of care. The Wit v. United Behavioral Health court case has shown behavioral health coverage guidelines for employer-sponsored plans were inconsistent with generally accepted standards of care and failed its duty of care for patients. Ensuring the Center for Consumer Information and Insurance Oversight within the Department of Labor has adequate funding to address enforcement of the law is paramount. Equally important is giving patients the ability to report suspected parity violations as was done during the Obama-Biden Administration’s Consumer Web Portal that has remained inactive since 2016.

Request: We request the Administration resume the Consumer Web Portal® to ensure consumers receive the resources they need for parity concerns. Additionally, we ask the Administration support the request from the Department of Labor for a minimum of $17 million in funding to assist robust enforcement efforts of the law.
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REFERENCES


4 Ibid


