



Eating Disorders Included in the Biden-Harris Administration National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health

WASHINGTON, D.C (September 29, 2022)-Yesterday, the Biden-Harris Administration hosted the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health. This is only the second time the conference has been held and the first time in over 50 years. Prior to the conference, the Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) in partnership with the National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders (NCEED) [submitted comments](#) and participated in a series of White House listening sessions to help inform the White House’s National Strategy and urge the inclusion of eating disorders within the national strategy and conference. **The EDC applauds the Administration for learning and listening to the expertise of the EDC and NCEED and integrating eating disorders into the national strategy.**

The goal of the White House Hunger Conference was to identify actionable items to help end hunger, improve nutrition and physical activity, and reduce diseases and disparities by 2030. To achieve this goal, the Biden-Harris Administration put forth a [National Strategy](#) that is divided into five pillars: (1) improving food access and affordability, (2) integrating nutrition and health, (3) empowering all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices, (4) support physical activity for all, and (5) enhance nutrition and food security research.

Eating disorders are mentioned in the National Strategy under Pillar 2- Integrate Nutrition and Health: *Prioritize the role of nutrition and food security in overall health and ensure that our health care system addresses the nutrition needs of all people.* The National Strategy stated that the Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services, and Department of the Treasury will clarify how **mental health parity protections apply to coverage related to nutritional counseling for eating disorders** to ensure coverage is not inappropriately being limited. Also mentioned in Pillar 2 is the expansion of nutrition counseling coverage within Medicaid and Medicare programs. The pillar investigates what nutrition services insurance plans already cover, to determine if the Administration can strengthen essential health benefit requirements or take other actions to expand private health coverage and better address the nutritional needs of Americans.

The inclusion of eating disorders and mention of expansion of nutrition counseling is a huge win for the eating disorders community and will help the EDC further advance the bipartisan, bicameral *Nutrition CARE Act* ([H.R. 1551/S. 584](#)). *The Nutrition CARE Act* would require Medicare to coverage medical nutrition therapy services for individuals with eating disorders.

“The explicit mention of medical nutrition therapy for eating disorders in the National Strategy is an important signal to patients and clinicians alike,” **said Dr. Christine Peat, EDC Board member and Director of the National Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders.** “It indicates a recognition that this is a crucial component of treatment and cannot be neglected. We know that dietician services are eager to provide care to folks struggling with eating disorders, and this signal in the National Strategy can help pave the way to meaningful change.”

Additionally, the eating disorder community is mentioned in Pillar 3- Empower All Consumers to Make and Have Access to Healthy Choices: *Foster environments that enable all people to easily make informed,*

healthy choices, increase access to healthy food, encourage healthy workplace and school policies, and invest in public education campaigns that are culturally appropriate and resonate with specific communities. It states that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) will pursue targeted law enforcement actions to **prevent the deceptive advertising of foods and dietary supplements, including deceptive advertising that might be targeted to youth.** Research shows young women have five times the increased risk of receiving a new eating disorder diagnosis after beginning diet pill use. Ensuring youth are not victim to predatory marketing is critical.¹ Further, the pledge will bolster support for the bipartisan *Kids Online Safety Act (S.3663)*, which seeks to protect children’s privacy and wellbeing online.

“In an increasingly digital world, where nearly two-thirds of youth ages 13-18 years old and nearly 20% of children ages 8-12 years old **are on social media every day**, children are being targeted online now more than ever with deceptive diet pill and weight-loss product ads,” **said S. Bryn Austin, ScD, EDC Board member and Professor of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.** “The White House call for the FTC to step up action to protect children from these deceptive ads is not a moment too soon and underscores the need for coordinated government leadership to address these emerging threats to child health and well-being.”

“Much of the conversation around nutrition and health has been centered around tackling the obesity ‘epidemic’ and more recently ‘diet-related disease,’” **said Chase Bannister, MDiv, MSW, LCSW, CEDS, President of EDC’s Board of Directors, Founder of Veritas Collaborative and Senior Vice President for Community Engagement of Accanto Health.** “However, eating disorders has remained largely absent from the conversation. The EDC is proud to have provided recommendations that influenced the White House’s National Strategy and are hopeful improvements to eating disorder care and youth mental health will be made. The EDC now looks forward to seeing the strategy plan put into action.”

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) is a Washington, DC-based, federal advocacy organization comprised of advocacy organizations, academics, treatment providers, family/loved ones of children with eating disorders, and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. The EDC advances the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the United States. Additional resources can also be found at eatingdisorderscoalition.org.

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Media Contact: Emily Rosenberg: erosenberg@eatingdisorderscoalition.org

¹ Levinson JA, et al. AJP. 2019; e1-e3.