

NEWS BITES

MARCH 2025

LAPPA NEWS

Come visit LAPPA in the Exhibition Hall at the Rx and Illicit Drug Summit April 21-24 in Nashville, Tennessee. Make a stop by our booth (322) to learn a little about our organization and make sure to get over to the Poster Hall where LAPPA's attorneys are presenting three posters this year:

- Drug Diversion in Healthcare Settings and LAPPA's Model State Law
Presenter: Heather Gray, Esq.
- Involuntary Treatment and Civil Commitment for Individuals with Substance Use Disorders and LAPPA's Model State Law
Presenter: Stephanie Noblit, Esq., MLS (ASCP)CM
- Pharmacist Collaboration in Prescribing/Administering Medications for Opioid Use Disorder and LAPPA's Model State Law
Presenter: Jon Woodruff, Esq.

In addition to these poster presentations, LAPPA Legislative Attorney Joseph Maschman and co-panelists Peter Gaumond and Andrea Barthwell, MD will be presenting on Health Insurance Parity for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder. The session, scheduled for Wednesday April 23 at 4:30 pm, will be moderated by LAPPA Board Member, Michael Barnes, Esq. and will explore the historical barriers that have limited patients' access to mental health and SUD insurance coverage, steps that have been taken to remove those barriers and establish legal protections for parity, and LAPPA's [Model Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Act](#), that establishes and enforces parity standards at the state level.

PUBLICATIONS

50-State Summaries

LAPPA recently completed an update of [Overdose Reversal Agent Access: Summary of State Laws](#). This 50-state summary details the current status of overdose reversal agent access laws throughout the United States, including the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories. In an effort to save lives, states have implemented laws to make it easier for first responders and the general public to obtain overdose reversal agents, such as naloxone. To encourage people to assist an individual who is or may be experiencing an overdose, the majority of states also enacted laws which protect laypeople who administer overdose reversal agents, in good faith, in an emergency from civil and/or criminal liability. As of January 2025, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have some form of an overdose reversal agent access law.

NOTABLE STUDIES

OTC Pain Relievers Outperform Opioids: A recent study funded by the National Institutes of Health and published in *The Journal of the American Dental Association*, found that a combination of over-the-counter pain relievers is more effective at managing post-operative pain after wisdom tooth extraction than opioids. As part of the study, more than 1,800 adults who had impacted wisdom teeth removed were given either a non-opioid combination of 400 mg ibuprofen and 500 mg acetaminophen, or an opioid combination of 5 mg hydrocodone and 300 mg hydrocodone. Those who took the non-opioid medications reported significantly less pain during the first two days after surgery, when pain is typically most severe; were more satisfied with pain management overall; and reported sleeping better compared to the patients who received opioid medication. Dentists are among the leading prescribers of opioid analgesics, often to young adults after tooth extractions, and many researchers are now noting that the findings of this study and others support growing support to use non-opioid pain relievers as the first choice for managing acute dental pain. Click [here](#), to read more about this study.

ED Orders for Buprenorphine on the Rise: According to a recent study published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, emergency clinicians in California increased their prescribing of buprenorphine for opioid use disorder (OUD) in the five-year period from 2017 to 2022. Annette M. Dekker, M.D. from UCLA and her colleague examined emergency clinician buprenorphine initiation for OUD, subsequent subscriptions and changes over time in their observational study. In a statement Dekker said ... “the emergency department might be the only touch point they have with the health care system, so it’s a huge window of opportunity to make a difference.” Read LAPP’s [Substance Use Disorder Treatment in Emergency Settings Act](#), and for more information about this study, click [here](#).

FEDERAL NEWS BITS

Non-opioid Pain Treatment Now FDA-approved: A non-opioid medication recently received approval from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat moderate to severe acute pain in adults, offering patients a long-awaited alternative to highly addictive current offerings such as oxycodone. The drug, called Journavx (suzetrigine), developed by Vertex Pharmaceuticals, is the first class of non-opioid pain medication approved by the FDA in more than 20 years, and unlike opioids, it does not have addictive properties. In two clinical trials involving adults between 18 and 80, Journavx reduced pain for patients by approximately 50 percent in a 48-hour period. The medication works by inhibiting pain signals in the body’s peripheral nervous system and is as effective as hydrocodone without its addictive qualities.

FDA Approves Ketamine-derived Depression Treatment: The FDA expanded approval for Johnson and Johnson’s nasal spray, Spravato, now allowing it to be used as a standalone treatment for patients suffering from severe depression. The ketamine-based drug was first approved in 2019 to be used in combination with traditional antidepressants and later for patients experiencing suicidal thoughts and actions. Spravato works by targeting glutamate, the neurotransmitter, that plays a key role in several functions. Patients treated with the therapy showed a rapid and superior improvement in severity of depressive episodes when compared to a placebo.

STATE NEWS BITS

California: Harmony Junction Recovery, a full-service substance abuse and mental health treatment center in Southern California, recently opened a pet-friendly rehab, a new program that combines evidence-based

treatment with the therapeutic benefits of companion animals. Integrating the presence of pets into the rehabilitation process helps to create a familiar and comforting environment that encourages individuals to focus on attaining sobriety. The program offers individuals the opportunity to bring their own companion animals to therapy sessions to provide emotional support, reducing stress during treatment.

Florida: Data from the state's departments of health and law enforcement show that seniors in the Tampa Bay area are dying from opioid overdoses at much higher rates than young people. Deaths remain highest in the 35–54-year-old age group, but senior citizens are now second in opioid overdose deaths in that area. Live Tampa Bay, an organization that mobilizes business, faith, nonprofit, and philanthropic leaders to reduce opioid deaths, plans to apply for opioid settlement funds to try and educate the senior population and increase prevention efforts in the Tampa Bay area.

Idaho: Governor Brad Little recently signed legislation increasing the state's fine for those convicted of simple marijuana possession to a mandatory minimum of \$300, starting July 1 of this year. According to the new law, simple marijuana possession in the State of Idaho is defined as possession of less than three ounces of marijuana. The bill was sponsored by a large group of Republican legislators and sets the state apart from most of its neighbors, which currently permit the use of some form of recreational and/or medical marijuana. Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washinton allow recreational use, while Utah only permits medical use.

Massachusetts: Boston families who have lost an immediate family member to an opioid overdose can apply for up to \$5,000 in financial assistance from the newly established Family Overdose Support Fund, to which the city and the Boston Public Health Commission have jointly committed \$250,000. Only one immediate family member can apply to receive money, which can be used to cover services such as childcare, clinical therapy or behavioral health support, or legal assistance necessary to apply for public benefits. It is expected that the program, which is being funded through settlements with opioid manufacturers and distributors, will benefit more than 50 families.

Ohio: According to a new database that tracks how state and local governments across the country are spending the billions of dollars jurisdictions received in opioid settlement funds, nearly half of Ohio's settlement money is untraceable. Over an 18-year period, Ohio and its communities will receive nearly \$2 billion. The database shows that Ohio received \$158 million in 2022 and 2023, with about half of those funds untraceable, meaning there are no public records on how that money was spent. The main reason for this lack of transparency is because there are virtually no requirements for those in control of how settlement funds get spent, to publicly report spending.

Oregon: Prison officials are keeping a close watch, as a barrage of strategies are being used to smuggle drugs into the state's correctional facilities, particularly through the mail. Some recent examples include heroin stuffed into the spine of a hardcover book, a fentanyl-laced greeting card, and a drawing on a piece of paper laced with methamphetamine. To combat this constant flow of illegal drugs, mailroom staff conduct meticulous inspections, examining each piece of paper, looking for alterations, stains, odors, and hidden contraband. In January of 2025, the state department of corrections implemented stricter mail regulations, limiting correspondence to white paper and envelopes only and prohibiting the use of colored pencils and markers. These restrictions have been met with criticism from advocacy groups who argue that they effectively prohibit children from sending drawings to their incarcerated parents. State officials have responded that the restrictions are necessary to protect state workers who they allege have been injured by fentanyl and methamphetamine exposures on the job.

South Carolina: A new database, made possible through the South Carolina Opioid Recovery Fund, is helping a wide variety of stakeholders with their efforts to combat the opioid crisis. The database includes real-time

information on opioid use, harm reduction efforts, and other resources that can help prevent overdose casualties. Opioid-related data is collected directly from several resources, fed into the database, and then made available to the general public to help further the goal of raising public awareness of the ongoing dangers of the opioid crisis and to provide them with information and resources. The information in the database is also being utilized by recovery organizations to assist those with SUD looking for treatment options.

UPCOMING EVENTS

LAPPA and the O’Neill Institute at Georgetown University Law Center recently collaborated to draft and publish the “[Model Building the Substance Use Disorder Workforce of the Future Act](#),” a comprehensive template for states to develop and implement a strategy to grow the SUD workforce. As the demand for SUD services grows, a well-trained and adequately staffed workforce is necessary to address the nation’s opioid epidemic, improve treatment outcomes, and prevent overdose deaths. On Tuesday, March 25 from 12:00pm to 1:15pm EST the O’Neill Institute will be hosting a webinar that will provide an overview of the Model Act followed by an engaging discussion on the following topics:

- The current state of the behavioral health workforce in the U.S. and key challenges;
- Opportunities for states to build a workforce that can effectively support individuals with SUD;
- Best practices to enhance recruitment, retention, and quality of care; and
- Strategies to strengthen and support the growing peer recovery and harm reduction workforce.

[Register for the Event](#)

ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS AND PUBLIC POLICY ASSOCIATION

The Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association (LAPPA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to conduct legal and legislative research and analysis and draft legislation on effective law and policy in the areas of public safety and health, substance use disorders, and the criminal justice system. The

LAPPA produces model laws on critical issues as well as comparative analyses, publications, educational brochures, and other tools that can be used by national, state, and local public health and public safety practitioners who want the latest comprehensive information on law and policy. Examples of topics on which LAPPA has assisted stakeholders include naloxone access, treatment in emergency settings, Medicaid Section 1115 demonstration waivers, medication for addiction treatment in correctional settings, collateral consequences of conviction, syringe services programs, and the health information disclosure provisions of HIPAA and 42 C.F.R. Part 2.

For more information about LAPPA, please visit: <https://legislativeanalysis.org/>.

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