

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



CHAIRMAN Special Committee on Aging

The Preventing and Treating Substance Use Disorders Among Older Adults Act

The rates of substance use disorders (SUDs) among older adults over the age of 65 have increased in recent years, with nearly four million older adults reporting an SUD in 2022. The number of older adults needing SUD treatment has tripled from 1.7 million in 2000 to 5.7 million in 2020. Further, older adults are also more likely to have certain factors that exacerbate the risk of developing more severe SUDs, including multiple chronic illnesses, chronic pain, social isolation, grief, loneliness, polypharmacy, and comorbid mental health disorders.

Unfortunately, older adults are often overlooked when developing screening, prevention, and treatment strategies. There are particular challenges older adults and older adults of color face when trying to access care. Lack of a robust SUD workforce, stigma and misconceptions regarding older adults, and the lack of available treatment settings that are adequate to meet older adults' specific needs are three of the top issues that contribute to older adults being unable to access treatment and recovery services. Compounding these challenges is the dearth of data available to promote understanding of how to best care for older adults with SUDs.

Without improved research, awareness, and tailored treatment and prevention services, older adults and their loved ones will continue to experience barriers in accessing appropriate SUD care.

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The *Preventing and Treating Substance Use Disorders Among Older Adults Act* will establish a grant program at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to improve understanding as well as treatment and prevention services for older adults with SUDs.

- Specifically, the bill would allow SAMHSA to award grants to eligible entities, particularly those located in areas of high need, to improve SUD treatment and prevention services for older adults, including those that seek to improve comprehensive care coordination and integrated care, data collection, and collaboration with older adults and their loved ones.

Cosponsors: Senators Blumenthal, Fetterman, Gillibrand, Warnock, and Warren

For more information or to cosponsor the Preventing and Treating Substance Use Disorders Among Older Adults Act, please contact Nikita Varman in Senator Casey's office at nikita_varman@help.senate.gov.

Supporting Organizations

Legal Action Center

New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc. (NJAMHAA)

The Pennsylvania Recovery Organizations – Alliance (PRO-A)