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**ASAM Applauds Emphasis on Solutions to America's  
Addiction and Overdose Crisis in President's State of the Union  
Address; Urges Caution Against Overreliance on Criminalization**

*White House Fact Sheet Highlights Specific Solutions to Help Increase  
Access to Evidence-Based Addiction Treatment and Save Lives*

**Rockville, MD** – The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) commends President Biden for highlighting in last night's State of the Union speech the urgent need to address the ongoing addiction and drug overdose crisis in America.

"The devastating addiction and overdose crisis is one of the most urgent health crises in American history, and we commend President Biden for using his State of the Union speech to highlight solutions that will increase access to evidence-based treatment for addiction and co-occurring conditions and save lives," said William F. Haning, III, MD, DLFAPA, DFASAM, president of the American Society of Addiction Medicine. "No corner of the country or community has been spared—which is why bold steps are desperately needed to prevent overdose deaths and support recovery. We need actionable policy that is commensurate with the magnitude of the overdose crisis."

In the lead up to the State of the Union address, the White House issued a [fact sheet](#) outlining steps to expanding access to evidence-based prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery services. The fact sheet indicates that the Biden-Harris Administration is working to strengthen mental health and addiction parity; diversify the addiction workforce; deliver more life-saving naloxone to communities; ensure every jail and prison across the nation can provide treatment for substance use disorder; and expand access to medications for opioid use disorder. In his speech, President Biden also hailed recent enactment of legislation that removed a barrier that hampered medical professionals from prescribing certain types of medications to treat patients with opioid use disorder.

Addiction is a treatable, chronic disease involving complex interactions among brain circuits, genetics, the environment, and an individual's life experiences. According to the latest Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [data](#), 46.3 million people aged 12

or older (or 16.5 percent of the population) had a substance use disorder in 2021. Yet, just 2.7 million people (6.3 percent) received any substance use treatment, underscoring the need to expand access to evidence-based addiction care. Further, there were an estimated [107,477 drug overdose deaths](#) between August 2021 and August 2022, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—one of the highest totals on record.

Advancing policies that expand affordable access to high-quality, addiction prevention and treatment; address the structural and social factors that exacerbate the nation’s addiction and overdose crisis; and improve medical professionals’ understanding of how to care for those living with substance use disorder is critical. Resources and efforts must continue to shift from a predominance of criminalization to a greater emphasis on more humane and cost-effective measures. Law enforcement interventions aimed at interrupting the distribution of illegal drugs should focus on those causing the most serious acute problems to society, not criminalizing people for having an active substance use disorder.

ASAM looks forward to continuing to work with the Biden-Harris Administration and Congress to ensure all Americans can lead healthy, productive lives.

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#### **About the American Society of Addiction Medicine**

The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), founded in 1954, is a professional medical society representing over 7,000 physicians, clinicians and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine. ASAM is dedicated to increasing access and improving the quality of addiction treatment, educating physicians and the public, supporting research and prevention and promoting the appropriate role of physicians in the care of patients with addiction. For more information, visit [www.ASAM.org](http://www.ASAM.org).