



The High Price of the Opioid Crisis

Increasing access to treatment can reduce costs

Untreated opioid use disorder (OUD), a chronic brain disorder, has a serious cost to people, their families, and society via increased health care spending, criminal justice issues, and lost productivity.

Each year, prescription opioid overdose, misuse, and dependence account for:



\$504 billion in economic costs¹

Patients with an OUD incur approximately \$11,000 in additional costs annually.²



\$41.8 billion in lost productivity³

6 in 10 adults with OUD are in the workforce; these individuals have higher rates of absenteeism, turnover, and avoidable hospital and emergency room use.⁴



\$7.7 billion in criminal justice costs⁵

96% of costs fall to state and local governments.⁶



\$6.1 billion in additional child and family assistance spending (e.g., child welfare)⁷

Counties with higher rates of overdose deaths and drug-related hospitalizations have higher rates of children entering foster care.⁸

More than 42,000 Americans died of an opioid overdose in 2016.⁹ Improving access to evidence-based treatments for OUD can help save lives and reduce costs to society.

Endnotes

- 1 Council of Economic Advisers, “The Underestimated Cost of the Opioid Crisis” (2017), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/images/The%20Underestimated%20Cost%20of%20the%20Opioid%20Crisis.pdf>.
- 2 Lauren M. Scarpati et al., “Drivers of Excess Costs of Opioid Abuse Among a Commercially Insured Population,” *American Journal of Managed Care* (2017), www.ajmc.com/journals/issue/2017/2017-vol23-n5/drivers-of-excess-costs-of-opioid-abuse-among-a-commercially-insured-population.
- 3 Altarum, “The Potential Societal Benefit of Eliminating the Opioid Crisis Exceeds \$95 Billion Per Year,” last modified Nov. 16, 2017, <https://altarum.org/publications/the-potential-societal-benefit-of-eliminating-the-opioid-crisis-exceeds-95-billion-per-year>.
- 4 Eric Goplerud, Sarah Hodge, and Tess Benham, “A Substance Use Cost Calculator for U.S. Employers With an Emphasis on Prescription Pain Medication Misuse,” *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine* 59, no. 11 (2017): 1063-1071, <http://doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0000000000001157>.
- 5 Curtis S. Florence et al., “The Economic Burden of Prescription Opioid Overdose, Abuse, and Dependence in the United States, 2013” *Medical care* 54, no. 10 (2016): 901-6, doi:10.1097/MLR.0000000000000625.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Altarum, “The Potential Societal Benefit.”
- 8 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, “The Relationship Between Substance Use Indicators and Child Welfare Caseloads” (2018), <https://aspe.hhs.gov/pdf-report/relationship-between-substance-use-indicators-and-child-welfare-caseloads>.
- 9 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Overdose Deaths Involving Opioids, Cocaine, and Psychostimulants—United States, 2015-2016,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 67, no. 12 (2018): 349-358, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6712a1.htm>.

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For further information, please visit:

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