



American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry (AAAP)

ADDRESSING SUBSTANCE ABUSE: A PRIORITY IN HEALTH CARE REFORM

Abuse of tobacco, alcohol, and other substances causes mental and physical illness and contributes to the social problems of violence, crime, homelessness, family disruption, decreased occupational performance, and legal difficulties. Addressing substance abuse should be a priority in health care reform.

The nation needs universal access to a minimum benefits health care package that will provide psychiatric treatment for alcoholism and substance-related disorders as part of the basic package. Coverage should be provided as well for additional psychiatric illness access at parity with medical and surgical illnesses. This should be in the core of managed competition or any other system initiated. Benefits must include screening, evaluation, detoxification, ongoing treatment, and follow-up with psychiatric input to assure quality care. Treatment in inpatient, organized outpatient, and office practice settings should be supported. Substance abuse prevention and treatment should be made a top national priority.

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