



**ASAM** American Society of  
Addiction Medicine

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **\$38.5 Billion Request to Congress for Emergency Funding to Avert Collapse of Behavioral Health Organizations Nationwide**

**Washington, D.C. (April 7, 2020)** – The National Council for Behavioral Health and the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) have [requested](#) a \$38.5 billion infusion of emergency funds for behavioral health organizations (BHOs) to avert a large-scale public health calamity, with a significant portion of these emergency funds dedicated to BHOs enrolled in Medicaid and serving some of the nation’s most vulnerable individuals.

In their emergency request to congressional leadership, the National Council and ASAM, on behalf of a [coalition of 40 mental health and addiction stakeholders](#), highlighted that BHOs nationwide are in an economic crisis and in jeopardy of failing because of the COVID-19 pandemic. If BHOs fail, millions of people living with mental illness or addiction will flood health centers, urgent care facilities and emergency departments, all of which are already overburdened. BHOs need this emergency funding in the next legislative package to combat the economic and health care effects of COVID-19, maintain operations and ensure stability for the duration of the crisis.

“This is the greatest crisis to ever hit mental health and addiction treatment providers,” National Council for Behavioral Health President and CEO Chuck Ingoglia said. “If we don’t take steps now to avert the collapse of the behavioral health system, we can expect millions of individuals with mental illness and addiction to arrive in overtaxed emergency departments across the nation. The need is immediate. It is also long-term. The nation will experience a profound aftershock of widespread anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. We can prevent that from happening, but only if emergency relief funds are distributed on an urgent basis to behavioral health organizations in all 50 states. That will ensure they are viable to respond today and in the future, when the immediate crisis has passed but the effects remain.”

“Behavioral health organizations are battling two emergencies: the COVID-19 pandemic and an explosion of patients in crisis as a result of isolation, anxiety and economic distress,” said Paul H. Earley, MD, DFASAM, president of ASAM. “We must shore up our nation’s addiction and mental health care systems now to stem the coming wave of acts of despair and unintentional overdose deaths. Addiction treatment organizations need immediate crisis funding—just as hospitals do right now—to purchase needed personal protective equipment (PPE), retain and hire staff, implement telehealth technologies and adjust their operations to meet the enormous challenges of the moment.”

The National Council surveyed its community behavioral health organization (CBHO) members to assess the projected reduction in their revenues attributable to the pandemic, including lost revenue, unanticipated increased costs from staff overtime, PPE and modifying outreach to patients, as well as implementing telehealth where possible. According to initial survey results, these CBHOs anticipate an average reduction in revenue of 49.16% over the next year.

The aggregate organizational revenue for CBHOs across the U.S. in 2019 was estimated at \$78.5 billion. The lost revenue attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic for CBHOs, alone, in 2020 is projected to be an estimated \$38.467 billion. Emergency funding of \$38.5 billion will help keep BHOs financially solvent and open to serve.

Prior to the COVID-19 emergency, the [White House Council of Economic Advisers](#) estimated the opioid overdose epidemic cost the United States \$696 billion in 2018—or 3.4% of GDP—and more than \$2.5 trillion for the four-year period from 2015 to 2018. Prominent leaders have warned the nation that the addiction crisis in America may worsen in the wake of COVID-19.

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### **About the National Council for Behavioral Health**

[The National Council for Behavioral Health](#) is the unifying voice of America’s health care organizations that deliver mental health and addictions treatment and services. Together with our 3,326 member organizations serving over 10 million adults, children and families living with mental illnesses and addictions, the National Council is committed to all Americans having access to comprehensive, high-quality care that affords every opportunity for recovery. The National Council introduced [Mental Health First Aid USA](#) and more than 2 million Americans have been trained.

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

The [American Society of Addiction Medicine](#) (ASAM), founded in 1954, is a professional medical society representing over 6,000 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.