

ISSUE BRIEF

Effective Suicide Screening and Assessment in the Emergency Department Act of 2021

Issue Overview

Suicide rates have increased significantly since 1999 in the United States. The most significant risk factors for suicidal behavior are mental health disorders and substance use disorders. Environment can also impact suicidal behavior through stressful life events and access to weapons or drugs. With this growing issue that impacts large populations of people, there is a need for reform in identification and assessment of suicidal behaviors in order to proactively try to offer the correct services for people who have these behaviors.

This act, paired with several other acts surrounding mental health care, aims to offer help for people who are struggling with mental health. This act is trying to be proactive in offering resources for people who have suicidal thoughts as a preventative means.

The House of Representatives has set a bill in motion regarding suicidal screening and assessment in the emergency department. The details of that bill can be found below.

House of Representatives Bill H.R. 1324

Effective Suicide Screening and Assessment in the Emergency Department Act of 2021

This bill offers an amendment to the Public Health Service Act to establish a program that improves the identification, assessment, and treatment of patients that are at risk of suicide in hospital emergency departments.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This plan develops policies and procedures for identifying and assessing individuals who are at risk of suicide • Also helps to enhance the coordination of care for these individuals after they are discharged • This bill has bipartisan support and an effective sponsor • This bill takes a proactive approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 40 eligible healthcare sites can be chosen for a grant, so it will not necessarily be implemented in every part of the country

Current Status

This bill was passed by the House of Representatives on May 12, 2021. It is waiting further approval and implementation.

What does this mean for us at The Sisters of Charity of Health System?

We want to understand that people suffer in different ways, and that suicide has a lasting impact on every family and our community. We applaud efforts to protect life. In order to increase access to the right care at the right time, it is important to understand the needs of our patients by appropriate reimbursable screenings. This legislation is increasing access to appropriate screenings to protect life.

What does this mean for you, your family, or your community?

Suicide has a great impact on families and entire communities. This bill has the potential to decrease the suicide rates in our community, which in turn protects families and communities.