

Policy Update: Biden Administration Issues Report on Mental Health Research Priorities

Lewis-Burke Associates LLC – February 17, 2023

In advance of President Biden's second State of the Union address, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and the Domestic Policy Council (DPC) issued the *White House Report on Mental Health Research Priorities*. The report, led by OSTP Director Dr. Arati Prabhakar and Assistant to the President and Domestic Policy Advisor Ambassador Susan Rice, is the first of its kind to outline an Administration-wide set of critical needs and opportunities in the mental health research space. The report includes both cross-cutting research priorities and topical research priorities as well as outlines critical gaps and opportunities in each area. It is likely that federal agencies will include more information on mental health research directions in the President's Budget Request, slated to be released on March 9. The report builds on the progress of the White House's March 2022 strategy to address the national mental health crisis, which included priority areas in strengthening system capacity, connecting Americans to care, and supporting Americans by creating healthy environments.

This report is the result of an OSTP effort to establish cross-agency scientific research priorities to improve prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and de-stigmatization of mental health conditions. In particular, the report focuses on research into mental health conditions that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, are associated with social stigma, and/or disparately impact or persist in certain populations due to inequities caused by historical and structural racism. The report aims to ensure coordination across federal research agencies, inform resource allocation, identify and maximize opportunities for federal agency collaboration while reducing duplication, and guide the broader scientific community. Key cross cutting and topical research priorities include:

Cross Cutting Research Priorities

- **Advancing equity in promoting mental health and in understanding, preventing, identifying and treating mental health conditions.**
 - Advancing mental health equity through research; and
 - Representation in clinical and implementation research.
- **Understanding and leveraging digital mental health interventions.**
 - Developing and assessing digital mental health interventions; and
 - Developing digital data standards.
- **Supporting and expanding the mental health workforce.**
 - Supporting and expanding the supply, capacity and diversity of the workforce trained to address mental health;
 - Addressing health worker burnout; and
 - Training mental health care providers in evidence-based therapies that address co-occurring physical health and substance use conditions.

Topical Research Priorities

- **Increasing the availability, quality, and impact of interventions for mental disorders in health care systems, communities, and justice settings.**

- Testing and evaluating care delivery approaches that increase system capacity and improve mental health care access across different settings without reducing quality and outcomes;
- Development, validation, and implementation of mental health-specific quality measures to evaluate access to care, service delivery, and treatment outcomes; and
- Broadening implementation of measurement-based care in care settings.
- **Integrating substance use disorder and mental health research and treatment.**
 - Promoting research in comprehensive, coordinated, and collaborative care;
 - Training providers in evidence-based therapies that address co-occurring mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) conditions;
 - Optimizing treatment for mental disorders co-occurring with SUDs; and
 - Supporting primary prevention and health promotion research.
- **Developing and improving treatments for serious mental illnesses.**
 - Fostering long-term engagement in care and recovery;
 - Advancing precision mental health; and
 - Optimizing available treatments.
- **Supporting youth mental health.**
 - Understanding and addressing the impacts of social media use on mental health;
 - Understanding how social media can be leveraged to promote mental health; and
 - Assessing and optimizing school-based interventions.

OSTP and DPC indicated opportunities for input and contributions by external nongovernmental experts and organizations would be part of the next steps, and that the Biden Administration is exploring further cross-agency opportunities for additional planning and implementation of mental health research priorities.

Sources and Additional Information:

- The full report is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/White-House-Report-on-Mental-Health-Research-Priorities.pdf>.
- The OSTP press release announcing the release of the report is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/news-updates/2023/02/07/white-house-report-on-mental-health-research-priorities/>.
- The fact sheet announced President Bidens strategy to address the national mental health crisis is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/01/fact-sheet-president-biden-to-announce-strategy-to-address-our-national-mental-health-crisis-as-part-of-unity-agenda-in-his-first-state-of-the-union/>.