



# Legislator Report

To inform and educate our Legislators about important

## Behavioral Health Issues

### The Treatment Gap

**T**reatment is cost-effective. Scientifically-based drug addiction treatment is effective in 50 percent to 75 percent of patients. While these rates are not ideal, of course, they are comparable to compliance rates seen with treatments for other chronic diseases such as asthma, hypertension, and diabetes. Moreover, treatment markedly reduces undesirable social consequences of drug abuse and addiction—such as unemployment, criminal activity, HIV/AIDS, and other infectious diseases—whether or not patients achieve complete abstinence. Research has shown that every \$1 invested in treatment saves \$4 to \$7 in costs related to drug abuse.

**Substantial evidence points to the success and cost benefits of substance abuse treatment.** Despite this fact, **studies consistently point to a gap between the demand for substance abuse treatment and its availability.** A report by the National Institute of Medicine concludes that addictive disorders are vastly untreated despite an increasing number of proven therapies and treatments. The collective costs of untreated substance abuse total more than \$276 billion each year.

The causes of the disparities in the treatment of substance abuse are many and are not limited to financial constraints. While addressing the treatment gap would add additional costs to current spending, the cost benefits of closing the treatment gap are indisputable.

### Special Points of Interest

- In 1999, approximately 14.8 million Americans were current users of illicit drugs.
- In 1999, Americans spent \$63.2 billion on illegal drugs, lost \$77.6 billion in earnings, spent \$11.9 billion on healthcare, and caused \$20.4 billion in other adverse societal impacts.
- Alcohol abuse is the 4th leading cause of physical and economic disabilities.
- Montana's youth are experimenting with a variety of illicit drugs, including marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroin, LSD, inhalants, methamphetamines, club drugs, other "street drugs", and misuse of prescription drugs.

### Addiction as a Brain Disease

**S**ince the human brain is the integrator of thought, emotion, behavior and health, **the brain has emerged as the central focus for studies of addictions.** Science has demonstrated that addictive disorders are reflected in physiological changes in the brain.

According to U.S. Surgeon General, David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D., "One of the foremost contributions of contemporary addictions research is the extent to which it has mended the destructive split between 'mental' and 'physical' health."

### Substance Abuse and Mental Disorders

**U**se and abuse of drugs, including alcohol, have significant physical and mental health consequences. There has been a growing awareness that substance abuse and addictive disorders frequently co-occur with mental disorders.

There is a call among experts in the U.S. to increase research and distribution of information on the relationships between mental illness and the abuse of drugs, alcohol and tobacco.



A state leader in providing behavioral health services

**About 30% of adults who have an addictive disorder in their lifetime also experience a co-occurring mental health problem**, which complicates treatment. Individuals with co-occurring disorders are more likely to experience a chronic treatment course and to use services than are those with either type of disorder alone. Even those who do have access to treatment may not see the most appropriate treatment provider or receive the appropriate treatment or medication.

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*Rimrock Foundation is Montana's oldest and largest private, non-profit treatment center. Rimrock has more than thirty-three years of experience in treating people who suffer from compulsive disorders and their families. Through that experience we have developed one of the most effective nationally-recognized treatment programs available today.*

**For more information regarding treatment services,  
please call (406) 248-3175, or 1-800-227-3953,  
or visit our website at [www.rimrock.org](http://www.rimrock.org)**