

University of Massachusetts Medical School

Community Health Clerkship
Health Advocacy

**SUBSTANCE ABUSE
INTRAVENOUS DRUG USE**

Advocacy Organizations	
What are some Local organizations that do advocacy work?	Henry Lee Willis Center, Worcester DPH
What are some State level organizations that do advocacy work?	AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, MA DPH-Bureau of Substance Abuse Services, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Corporations of Massachusetts
What are some National level organizations that do advocacy work?	AIDS Action, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Institute on Drug Abuse, North American Syringe Exchange Network, Drug Policy Alliance, Centers for Disease Control
What are some International organizations that do advocacy work?	World Health Organization- Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse
Advocacy Issue	
Looking at the State, National, and/or International level, at the websites or information from the organizations above, what is a major area of advocacy at this time? <i>Try to choose an advocacy issue that will in some way affect the local community.</i> Advocacy specifically refers to promoting legislation, policies or specific budgetary appropriations that positively affect a health issue. This may occur through decreasing barriers to accessing health services, providing an infrastructure conducive to effective health promotion programs, or directly increasing the resources and infrastructure of the public health system.	
What specific law, policy or appropriation is being advocated for?	Insurance Coverage for addiction treatment
Who is doing the advocating? (Which organizations?)	American Society of Addiction Medicine, National Alliance of Mental Health, Mental Health Liaison Group

Who is being lobbied?	The US House of Representatives; Senate passed a parity bill (S 558) on Sept 18, 2007
Whom will this issue affect?	Substance abusers looking for affordable insurance coverage for treatment services, physicians treating substance abuse
Were they or will they (in your opinion) be successful?	I am not sure that they will be successful, mostly because a version of this bill has been stuck in committees since 2001. Despite bipartisan support in Congress and support from President Bush, the insurance lobby in Washington is quite strong, and is strongly opposed to the passage of this bill.
Why or why not? What do they need to be more successful?	Keeping this bill in the public eye would help to put pressure on the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which held up the passage of the bill in the last Congress.
What are the consequences if they are not successful?	Currently, insurance companies treat mental illnesses including addiction differently from physical illnesses and often demand higher copays and deductibles for plans that cover substance abuse treatment and other mental health services.
If they are not successful, what other strategies can be used to achieve the same goal?	There are currently 46 states with some type of mental health coverage laws, although only 21 states include coverage for substance abuse, alcohol or drug addiction. More state legislatures can be lobbied to introduce them, although they would not be protected against changes by federal legislation.
How can physicians and/or nurses be involved in this advocacy issue?	By contacting their representative in Congress and advocating support for the bill.