



Emergency Nurses Association Urges Lawmakers to Pass Mental Health Reform and Support EMS Administration of Life-Saving Medications

More than 120 nurses to meet with congressional leaders to support patient-centered legislation

(May 10, 2016) – A lack of mental health services continues to tax America, and that impact is felt in emergency departments across the United States as mental health patients utilize more resources than other types of patients.

This week, [Emergency Nurses Association](#) members are on Capitol Hill advocating for legislation that directly impacts emergency nursing. More than 120 ENA members from across the U.S. are in Washington, DC, urging Congress to support comprehensive reforms to our nation's mental health system, and legislation that will allow emergency medical services personnel to continue to operate under standing orders to administer controlled substances. May 11 is the association's annual Day on the Hill event.

ENA research shows the average emergency department stay for mental health patients is 18 hours versus four hours for all other types of patients.

"More than 11 million Americans have a severe mental illness, yet millions do not receive treatment due to a broken mental health system," said ENA President Kathleen E. Carlson MSN, RN, CEN, FAEN. "They have nowhere to turn except emergency departments for care. As a result, they often have to wait many hours or even days in an emergency department before an inpatient mental health bed becomes available."

Last year, ENA members urged their representatives to support pending comprehensive mental health reform legislation. Bills have since been introduced in both the House (H.R. 2646) and Senate (S. 2680), and ENA members will urge representatives to support passage of those bills. The bills will improve the nation's mental health system by focusing programs and resources on psychiatric care for patients and families most in need.

"ENA also supports allowing EMS personnel to continue to provide care—including administering controlled substances as required," said ENA President Kathleen E. Carlson MSN, RN, CEN, FAEN. "This time-sensitive and lifesaving care can often be the difference between life and death for patients with a medical emergency."

On EMS care, ENA members will ask legislators to support legislation introduced in the House (H.R. 4365) that would update the Controlled Substances Act by clarifying that EMS personnel, in the course of their duties, may continue to use standing orders to administer a controlled substance. The legislation is necessary because the Drug Enforcement Agency is threatening to end the longstanding and time-honored safe practice.

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About the Emergency Nurses Association

The Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) is the premier professional nursing association dedicated to defining the future of emergency nursing through advocacy, education, research, innovation, and leadership. Founded in 1970, ENA has proven to be an indispensable resource to the global emergency nursing community. With more than 42,000 members worldwide, ENA advocates for patient safety, develops industry-leading practice standards and guidelines, and guides emergency healthcare public policy. ENA members have expertise in triage, patient care, disaster preparedness, and all aspects of emergency care. Additional information is available at www.ena.org.