



Bipartisan Senators Reintroduce the Nutrition CARE Act to Improve Coverage for Eating Disorders Treatment for Medicare Beneficiaries

WASHINGTON, D.C (October 4, 2023)- The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy, & Action (EDC) celebrates the reintroduction of the Nutrition Counseling Aiding Recovery for Eating Disorders (Nutrition CARE) Act (S.3010) championed by Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). The Nutrition CARE Act ensures that every core component of treatment for eating disorders, including medical nutrition therapy, is covered by Medicare.

Eating disorders for older Americans and Americans with disabilities are particularly serious given the likelihood of co-occurring chronic conditions that further compromise an individual's health and well-being. Beneficiaries under age 65 comprise 16% of all Medicare enrollees, however; they represent approximately 42% of enrollees with an eating disorder diagnosis.¹ Despite the prevalence of eating disorders within these populations, Medicare excludes coverage for outpatient nutrition counseling—a core component of comprehensive treatment for eating disorders.

To treat eating disorders, nutritional services must be included in the comprehensive approach to recovery.² Medical nutrition therapy is essential to addressing the life-threatening complications of eating disorders and ensuring full recovery. Currently, eating disorder patients covered by Medicare do not have access to these crucial services and are thereby limited in their ability to access evidence-based care. The Nutrition CARE Act aims to change this by requiring Medicare to cover outpatient medical nutrition therapy for beneficiaries diagnosed with an eating disorder.

“Eating disorders can affect all Americans, including older people and individuals who experience disabilities,” **said Senator Maggie Hassan**. “For these groups especially, an eating disorder can be life threatening, and it is critical that people on Medicare with an eating disorder can get the full help that they need.”

“The Nutrition CARE Act will ensure that elders and people with disabilities battling eating disorders will at long last have access to the final component of eating disorder treatment services that they have always needed to reach meaningful recovery,” **said Monika Ostroff LICSW, CEDS-S, Executive Director, Multi-Service Eating Disorder Association (MEDA) and New Hampshire resident**. “I am very appreciative to Senator Hassan for championing this legislation. As a former Medicare recipient, I can say that lack of access to nutrition services certainly made my own quest for recovery from an eating disorder much more difficult than it needed to be.”

“Eating disorders are dangerous illnesses that harm the health of millions of Americans, regardless of their age or background., **said Senator Lisa Murkowski**. “The bipartisan Nutrition CARE Act would help ensure that seniors and people living with disabilities who struggle with eating disorders have increased access to medical nutrition therapy – an effort that would make a difference in Alaska, where

¹ Presskreischer, R., Steinglass, J. E., & Anderson, K. E. (2022). Eating disorders in the U.S. Medicare population. *The International journal of eating disorders*, 55(3), 362–371. <https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.23676>

² Ruiz-Prieto, Inmaculada, Bolanos-Rios, Patricia and Jauregui-Lobera, Ignacio. (2013). Diet Choice in weight-restored patients with eating disorders; progressive autonomy by nutritional education. *Nutricion Hospitalaria*, 28:5, 1725-1731.

we face a shortage of treatment options. Together, we can support people who struggle with eating disorders, destigmatize the illness among older people, and improve the health of seniors and people living with disabilities.”

“We are grateful and proud that Senator Murkowski is taking leadership on this important gap in coverage,” **said Becca Kirian, MFN, AP-RDN, Executive Director, Alaska Eating Disorders Alliance.** “I am a registered dietitian who has seen countless Medicare beneficiaries -- and unfortunately, I have been unable to see just as many patients due to coverage gaps. The current Medicare coverage for Medical Nutrition Therapy is incredibly restrictive. Our older adults -- our parents, grandparents, neighbors, and friends who have eating disorders need this coverage.”

“The EDC is proud to continue our work in championing the Nutrition CARE Act,” **said Christine Peat, PhD., Eating Disorders Coalition Board of Directors President, Director, National Center of Excellence on Eating Disorders, and Associate Professor of Psychiatry, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.** “For too long, Medicare beneficiaries with eating disorders have forgone a core component of treatment or been forced to pay out of pocket. Passage of this legislation would ensure access to the full suite of services necessary for eating disorder recovery, and we are committed to seeing it through.”

The Eating Disorders Coalition for Research, Policy & Action (EDC) is a Washington, DC based, federal advocacy organization comprised of advocacy organizations, academics, treatment providers, family/loved ones of children with eating disorders, and people experiencing eating disorders nationwide. The EDC advances the recognition of eating disorders as a public health priority throughout the United States. Additional resources can also be found at <https://eatingdisorderscoalition.org/>.

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