



Congress Passes 21st Century Cures Act

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Congress has passed the landmark [21st Century Cures Act](#) with overwhelming bipartisan support. The House and Senate easily passed the new legislation with a vote of 392-26 and 94-5 respectively. As a vocal supporter of the bill, President Obama is expected to sign it as soon as it reaches his desk.

The 21st Century Cures Act covers a wide range of health issues. According to the act's mission statement, the bill aims to "help modernize and personalize health care, encourage greater innovation, support research, and streamline the system." More specifically, the bill authorizes an additional \$6.3 billion to bolster medical research and other health care initiatives. Of that \$6.3 billion, \$4.3 billion will be given to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) over the next ten years to research several new initiatives including:

- Vice President Biden's [Cancer Moonshot](#) program to expedite cancer research.
- The [BRAIN Initiative](#) project to further understand the human brain.
- The [Precision Medicine Initiative](#) to help develop new treatments from collaborative genetic, environmental, and lifestyle data.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is also receiving \$500 million over the next ten years to improve medical technology and streamline the process on approving drugs. Moreover, States are receiving grants worth up to \$1 billion over the next two years to improve the opioid epidemic, and provide the necessary resources to help people with addiction seek treatment.

Mental Health Reform

Another significant issue that the 21st Century Cures Act covers is mental health. This is exciting news because it is considered the most momentous mental health reform in years. The bill not only provides more funding to increase the number of psychologists and psychiatrists throughout the country, but also creates new grants for mental health programs and intervention strategies.

For example, the bill requires States to allocate 10 percent of their grant money to early intervention strategies for psychosis, called coordinated specialty care. Studies conducted by the NIH have concluded that early treatment and intervention can help limit symptoms and improve the overall quality of life for people suffering from psychosis. Additionally, the 21st Century

Cures Act has created a \$5 million grant program for assertive community treatment. This treatment helps patients with schizophrenia have a professional team on call 24 hours a day.

Lastly, this bill at the State level also allows for some flexibility on how the mental health grants will be used. For example, some states may focus on the importance of improving crisis intervention centers, while others may want to use funds to better train law enforcement officers when approaching someone who is experiencing a psychiatric crisis. At the Federal level, the bill calls for greater coordination between all departments that deal with mental health. If agencies better coordinate their efforts, patients will be able to receive necessary mental health services more effectively and efficiently.

While it is exciting that the 21st Century Cures Act has authorized these grants, a future Congress will still need to approve the funding. This means that continued advocacy for mental health issues is a must. Nevertheless, this bill is a monumental step for mental health reform!

