

OVERVIEW

Substance misuse remains a pressing issue in New Hampshire and Vermont, consistently ranking as a top priority in Upper Valley community health needs assessments. Data indicates that substance use disorder (SUD) prevalence in these states surpasses national averages, and overdose deaths continue to impact local communities. Addressing this crisis requires policy action to strengthen prevention, treatment, and recovery systems. We ask policymakers to support key legislative efforts that improve access to treatment, establish oversight for recovery services, and implement harm reduction measures.

New Hampshire and Vermont are both implementing significant legislative efforts to address substance use and mental health challenges through various bills aimed at enhancing treatment, prevention, and recovery services.

- New Hampshire is focusing on expanding harm reduction, certification for treatment facilities, and improving recovery housing access.
- Vermont, on the other hand, is focusing on enhancing Medicaid coverage for critical treatment services, setting up an overdose prevention pilot, and making progress on recovery housing legislation.

FACTS AND FIGURES

NEW HAMPSHIRE

- Between 2017 and 2019, approximately 8.0% of young adults aged 18–25 in NH reported an illicit drug use disorder in the past year ([link](#))
- Additionally, 18.2% of young adults in the same age group reported alcohol use disorder during this period, higher than both regional average (13.7%) and the national average (9.8%) ([link](#))

POLICY TAKEAWAYS

- **Improved Treatment Access:** Bills like S.36 (VT) and HB 751 (NH) ensure that treatment facilities maintain high standards and that individuals have access to necessary care.
- **Harm Reduction Strategies:** HB 73 (NH) and HB 226 (NH) focus on reducing the immediate harms of substance misuse through drug-checking initiatives and refined policy structures.
- **Recovery Housing Support:** HB 432 (NH) and H.222 (VT) work to integrate recovery residences into communities through zoning protections.
- **Sustained funding:** Protecting NH's Alcohol Fund ensures long-term financial support for prevention, treatment, and recovery programs.

CONCLUSION

Strengthening substance misuse treatment and recovery systems in New Hampshire and Vermont requires a coordinated policy approach that enhances access to care, supports harm reduction, and ensures sustainable funding. By understanding these legislative efforts, policymakers and stakeholders can work together to address this ongoing public health crisis.

VERMONT

- Between 2017 and 2019 21.1% of young adults aged 18–25 in Vermont reported having a substance misuse disorder in the past year, also exceeding the national average ([link](#))
- In 2022, alcohol use disorder was the most prevalent past-year substance use disorder among individuals aged 12 and older in VT ([link](#))

CURRENT LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS

NEW HAMPSHIRE

- **House Bill 73 (HB 73):** Introduced in January 2025, this bipartisan bill enhances harm reduction strategies and refines the role of the Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery
- **House Bill 751 (HB 751):** Proposes the certification of alcohol and substance misuse treatment facilities by the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure compliance with quality care standards
- **House Bill 432 (HB 432):** Aims to clarify the definition of "recovery house" and provide guidance on zoning ordinances to support the development of recovery housing
- **Alcohol Fund Protection:** New Hampshire allocates 5% of gross profits from alcohol sales to the Alcohol Fund to support prevention, treatment, and recovery programs; maintaining this allocation is vital to sustaining these services
- **House Bill 226 (HB 226):** Proposes legalizing the use and distribution of drug-checking equipment, currently classified as an unclassified misdemeanor, to improve access to life-saving drug testing kits

VERMONT

- **Senate Bill 36 (S.36):** Seeks to mandate Medicaid coverage for long-term residential treatment for individuals with co-occurring substance use disorders and mental health conditions
- **House Bill 222 (H.222):** Requires Medicaid to cover medically necessary medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder and mandates that recovery residences be treated as single-family homes under municipal land use bylaws
- **House Bill 72 (H.72):** Approves the creation of an overdose prevention center pilot program in Burlington to prevent fatal overdoses, provide harm reduction services, and offer treatment referrals



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METHODOLOGY

In the fall of 2024, the Public Health Council of the Upper Valley hosted a legislative event to engage policymakers and subject matter experts in discussion of key health issues in the area. Following the event, participants were asked to prioritize policy issues for further exploration. Additional conversations with experts in addiction treatment, harm reduction, and recovery services further informed the development of this summary.

We also connected with local statewide advocacy groups and public health organizations in the Upper Valley to gain insights into community needs and current gaps in services. By synthesizing this information and consulting with stakeholders, we developed an overview of legislative efforts that could significantly impact treatment and recovery systems in New Hampshire and Vermont.

REFERENCES

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