



SOCIETY OF
BEHAVIORAL
MEDICINE

2026 Public Policy Agenda

The Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) represents 2,400+ scientific researchers, clinicians, industry professionals, educators, and students who work collectively to treat and prevent disease through research and interventions that improve the health of individuals, families, and whole communities. Our members focus on behavior change across the lifespan and work in more than 40 specialty areas, including nutrition, cancer, chronic disease, obesity, and physical activity.

Behavioral medicine is a multi-disciplinary field with scientifically proven strategies for improving health behaviors in individual patients' lives and entire communities. Most of our nation's leading health care challenges involve behavioral causes, requiring behavioral solutions. Unhealthy behaviors such as tobacco use, sedentary lifestyle, poor sleep, and unhealthy diet are contributing factors to many preventable diseases and premature deaths in the United States. Healthy behaviors such as quitting smoking, exercising, sleeping well, healthy diet, getting cancer screenings, managing stress, getting vaccinated, and using mindfulness techniques can prevent disease, be a vital part of a disease treatment plan, and significantly improve quality of life.

Maintaining a Robust and Sustained Funding for Biomedical and Behavioral Research

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the primary agency of the U.S. government responsible for biomedical, behavioral, and public health research. The NIH supports and conducts groundbreaking research aimed at improving human health, preventing disease, and advancing medical knowledge.

Through funding for scientists and institutions across the country and its own intramural research programs, the NIH plays a critical role in driving scientific discovery, fostering innovation, and translating research findings into effective treatments and public health strategies. Its work is essential to improving health outcomes and maintaining the United States' leadership in biomedical research.

For decades, bipartisan majorities in Congress have recognized the importance of federally supported investments in medical research, allowing NIH to support science that leads to healthier patients, robust economic returns, and a more competitive nation. Since the new administration took office, policies have been implemented at NIH to delay, terminate, or prevent the release of appropriated funding for peer-reviewed grants, including for research that is consistent with the administration's stated policy priorities. This is delaying potentially life-saving research, disrupting clinical trials and networks, causing loss of jobs, and forcing future and early-stage investigators to consider alternatives to medical research careers. They are also proposing to reorganize the NIH by drastically cutting its budget and consolidating its 27 institutes into 8, shifting the agency's focus from broad scientific research to narrowly defined national priorities.

Recommendations:

- Congress must intervene and ensure that NIH reestablishes effective processes for the review of grants and distribution of funds to support new and ongoing meritorious research proposals following a rigorous peer review process.
- We ask Congress to exercise its oversight authority immediately and demand that HHS halt any pending changes to the organization of NIH and instead provide a scientific and policy rationale for these changes with an opportunity for Congress and stakeholder comment to ensure that the agency's essential functions are preserved, and the full range of research are realized.
- We urge Congress to pass the final LHHS appropriations bill that protects the NIH and provides at least \$48.7 billion to support continued growth in medical research funding.



Ensuring Access to Healthy Foods

Food insecurity remains a serious public health challenge in the United States. Limited access to affordable, nutritious foods contributes to higher rates of diet-related diseases such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Nationally, nearly 1 in 5 households with children experience food insecurity, where they lack consistent access to enough food to support an active and healthy life. Children from low-income households and racial and ethnic minority communities are disproportionately affected, heightening their risk of chronic illness and long-term health disparities.

Federal nutrition programs play a critical role in addressing food insecurity. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides essential food benefits to low-income families, helping them purchase healthier foods and reducing childhood hunger. In 2024 alone, SNAP supported nearly 42 million children and families per month. Similarly, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) helps ensure that pregnant women, new mothers, and young children have access to healthy foods and nutrition education during critical developmental years.

Federal legislation such as the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act has helped guarantee that millions of children have access to free or reduced-price meals during the school day, which often serves as their most reliable source of nutritious food. However, recent administrative actions threatened to weaken these critical programs through funding cuts and policy changes. Reductions to such programs would exacerbate food insecurity, increase healthcare costs, and undermine decades of progress in improving children's health outcomes.

Recommendations:

- We urge Congress to continue supporting legislation that maintains and strengthens healthy school meal standards.
- We urge Congress to protect and increase funding for critical nutrition programs such as SNAP and WIC.

Additional Public Policy Concerns

- Ensure that older adults can access nonopioid forms of pain management; and increase access to evidence based opioid and substance use treatment that is culturally informed and developmentally tailored for youth.
- Maintain and expand ways to reduce or eliminate infectious diseases (e.g. HIV and HPV), and to properly care for those infected or at high risk.
- Ensure that evidence-based behavioral medicine is used to mitigate climate change and its adverse effects on health, particularly for vulnerable populations.