

WCHA Statement on Psychiatric Medications and Mental Health Treatment

May 2026

The West Coast Health Alliance affirms the nation's strong and growing commitment to addressing mental health needs, and we welcome continued federal attention to expanding resources, improving care access, and supporting the wellbeing of individuals, families, and communities. We value community connectedness and public health interventions to promote wellbeing. We also support the biopsychosocial model recognizing that individuals have unique biological, psychological, and social factors that may impact their mental health. Both nonpharmacologic interventions—such as psychotherapy, peer support, lifestyle and stress-reduction strategies, and community-based supports—and pharmacologic therapy play essential and complementary roles in supporting mental health.

For many people, psychiatric medications are a cornerstone of effective health treatment, offering relief from debilitating symptoms and enabling fuller participation in daily life. Their proper use—grounded in clinical evidence and shared decision-making—remains vital to ensuring safe, effective, and equitable health care.

The established process of prescribing psychiatric medications in the United States already incorporates robust safeguards, including transparent communication with patients, shared decision-making, routine monitoring, and careful consideration of evidence-based alternatives prior to initiating pharmacotherapy. These principles are foundational to clinical practice and standards of care across psychiatry, primary care, pediatrics, and behavioral health.

At present, there is inadequate evidence to conclude that psychiatric medications are being overprescribed at a population level in the United States. Assertions suggesting widespread overprescribing—particularly when not supported by rigorous data—risk unintended consequences. Such claims can reinforce stigma around mental health conditions, undermine public confidence in effective treatments, lead patients to abruptly discontinue medications that may lead to serious health risk, and discourage individuals from seeking appropriate care, including medications that may be lifesaving for many.

We urge that any new initiatives aimed at improving mental health care be grounded in transparent data, developed in partnership with mental health professionals and

patients, and designed to strengthen—rather than inadvertently weaken—access to comprehensive, evidence-based treatment. In addition, robust prevention efforts are critical for ensuring that all individuals can thrive in school, relationships, and community life.

The West Coast Health Alliance remains committed to promoting mental health, reducing stigma, supporting patient-centered shared decision-making, and ensuring that patients and families receive the support and treatment they deserve. As we collectively work to strengthen the mental health system, it is essential that public policy efforts reflect the needs of individuals and families, standards of clinical practice, and the best available scientific evidence to inform healthy decisions.

About the WCHA

The West Coast Health Alliance (WCHA) is a partnership among California, Hawai'i, Oregon, and Washington to ensure that public health recommendations are guided by safety, efficacy, transparency, access and trust. We will work together to reduce confusion and ensure that the public has access to clear, reliable information.