

**Testimony from the American Counseling Association to the House Ways and Means Subcommittee
on Health**

**“Hearing on the Opioid Crisis: Removing Barriers to Prevent and Treat Opioid Abuse and Dependence
in Medicare”**

Introduction

Chairman Roskam, Ranking Member Levin, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, I appreciate this opportunity to address the Opioid Crisis from the perspective of professional counseling and its impact on Medicare beneficiaries.

The American Counseling Association is the largest organized body of professional counselors in the world. Our 54,000 members include licensed professional counselors and other professionals who provide counseling services to individuals, groups, and organizations.

average annual rate of 9%, faster than any other payer type and more than twice as fast as Medicaid². These numbers indicate that Medicare paid for 1/3 of all opioid related hospitalizations in 2012.

Bipartisan Congressional Legislation: H.R. 3032

The exclusion of licensed professional counselors IS a barrier to prevent and treat opioid abuse among Medicare beneficiaries and fits squarely in the focus of this hearing.

There has been a consistent, bipartisan effort in Congress to address this inequity and, in the 115th

At a Capitol Hill event sponsored by the American Counseling Association in April 2017, we showed

Appendix A: Licensed Professional Counselor Methods

Counselors use a strengths based approach and work to address the underlying reasons for addiction, such as past trauma or depression, which may cause individuals to turn to opioids to self medicate.

Counselors bring an attention to the whole person. We build on a client's strengths. We help people to know how to be sad in a healthy way, how to be angry in a healthy way, and what to do with those emotions. Many people come to counseling who can't even identify that they're angry. It's been trained out of them by life experience.

Counselors are uniquely skilled to support clients in their recovery goals—and to address their possible relapses.

The Wellness Model many counselors use emphasizes: Employing resources; what is working well (rather than focusing on problems).

Using a positive, rather than punitive, approach. ;