

Understanding the Congressional Appropriations Process

Opportunities for Injury and Violence Prevention Professionals to Engage

This resource provides an overview of the annual Congressional appropriations process, which determines federal funding for programs such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (NCIPC). Understanding this process can help injury and violence prevention professionals identify key intervals during the legislative process when it is most impactful to engage with policymakers and advocate for NCIPC funding.

Why Engagement Matters

Injury and violence prevention professionals play a critical role in educating policymakers about the importance of NCIPC funding. Engagement with your Congressional delegation is most effective when it occurs consistently throughout the annual appropriations cycle, not just at a single point in time. Building relationships, sharing data and stories, and reinforcing the value of prevention programs at multiple stages can significantly influence funding outcomes.

Key Steps in the Appropriations Process

EXECUTIVE PROCESS

President's Budget Request



The process begins when the President submits a budget request to Congress, typically in early February (though timing may vary). This proposal outlines the Administration's funding priorities, including recommendations for CDC and NCIPC programs. The President's budget request can act as a blueprint that informs the drafting of appropriations bills in Congress.

LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

House and Senate Budget Resolutions



The House and Senate Budget Committees develop budget resolutions that establish overall spending levels. These resolutions often differ from each other and from the President's proposal. Importantly, budget resolutions are not signed into law; rather, they serve as a framework for appropriations decisions.

Appropriations Drafting (Subcommittee Level)



House and Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) Appropriations Subcommittees draft funding bills for CDC, including NCIPC programs. Subcommittees draft, debate, amend ("mark up"), and approve bills.

Appropriations Drafting (Full Committee)




Following subcommittee approval, the full House and Senate Appropriations Committees review the LHHS appropriations bills. These bills are again subject to markups and must be approved by the full committees before advancing.

Floor Consideration




Once approved by the Appropriations Committees, the bills move to the House and Senate floors. Members debate, amend, and vote on the legislation.

Reconciliation (Conference Committee)


 In most cases, the House and Senate pass different versions of the appropriations bills. A conference committee, composed of members from both chambers, is convened to reconcile these differences and produce a final, unified bill.

CONGRESS FINALIZES SPENDING LEVELS

Final Passage

 The reconciled bill must be approved again by both the House and Senate. Passage in both chambers is required before the bill can be sent to the President. If Congress does not finalize appropriations by October 1 (the start of the federal fiscal year), it may pass a Continuing Resolution (CR) to temporarily fund the government or risk a government shutdown.

Presidential Signature


 After Congressional approval, the bill is sent to the President to be signed into law. Once signed, it officially establishes funding levels for federal agencies and programs, including the CDC and NCIPC.

**Step 8 signifies the completion of the Appropriations Process*



APPORTIONMENT

Allocation and Implementation

 After enactment, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) distributes funding to federal agencies, including the CDC, in accordance with Congressional directives.

Why Engagement Matters

Take an active role in advocacy by exploring Safe States Alliance resources for more information, tools, and guidance on engaging in the appropriations process and supporting injury and violence prevention funding. Stay informed, use advocacy strategies, and commit to contacting your policymakers at key stages in the process to make your voice heard and help secure funding throughout the year.

Definitions

Appropriations: Bills passed by Congress that provide specific funding amounts to federal agencies and programs, including the Injury Center.

Apportionment: The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) distributes, or “apportions”, the appropriated funds to federal agencies and programs.

Continuing Resolution (CR): A stopgap funding bill passed by Congress and signed by the President to temporarily fund federal government agencies.

**The appropriations process is complex and subject to change. Timelines, procedures, and outcomes may vary from year to year due to political, economic, and procedural factors.*

