



## **CAADPE Puts California Cities on Notice:**

### **Blocking Treatment Facilities Violates Federal Law**

*Statewide Association Sends Letters Warning That NIMBY Opposition to Substance Use Disorder Programs Exposes Local Jurisdictions to Civil Rights Liability*

**(SACRAMENTO, CA)**—The California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives (CAADPE), which represents more than 400 SUD treatment sites, today announced it sent letters to cities across California warning that organized opposition to licensed substance use disorder (SUD) treatment facilities may violate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and expose jurisdictions to significant federal and state civil rights liability. CAADPE is calling on city attorneys to evaluate treatment facility applications on their operational merits, apply the same standards used for comparable health care uses, and reject discriminatory conditions grounded in stigma rather than evidence.

The letters follow a surge of NIMBY-driven opposition to treatment facilities, including in San Mateo, Burlingame, and most recently San Pedro, where Fred Brown’s Recovery Services has faced sustained local resistance to its proposed Serenity Recovery Campus – a project partially funded through California’s Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP). CAADPE is making clear that what is happening in those communities is not an isolated policy dispute – it is a statewide pattern, and it is illegal.

*“We have watched this same story play out for years. The language changes, the city changes, but the outcome is always the same: people who need treatment cannot get it because of where they live. A person’s zip code should not determine whether they live or die. We are putting every jurisdiction in this state on notice that the law agrees with us.”*

**— Robb Layne, Executive Director, CAADPE**

In compliance with Title II of the ADA, CAADPE’s letters remind local governments that individuals in treatment or recovery from substance use disorders are persons with disabilities. As such, local governments may not exclude them from services, impose discriminatory zoning conditions, or use permitting and licensing mechanisms to achieve outcomes that would be unlawful if pursued directly. Critically, ADA liability does not require proof of discriminatory intent – policies that have a disparate impact on SUD programs, or on the people they serve, may still violate the law. The letters also note that the Fair Housing Act provides independent civil rights protections for sober living facilities and recovery residences, and that Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act applies to virtually all California SUD providers receiving federal funding, including through the Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System.

*“Treatment providers across California licensed and certified by the state and under county contracts are doing everything right and still getting blocked at every turn by fear and misinformation. NIMBY is alive and well and standing in the way of care for those in need. As operators, we follow the rules. We serve our neighbors. We strengthen our communities. The law protects our right to provide substance use treatment in the community to do that work, and CAADPE is making sure local governments know the resources available to them.”*

**— Al Senella, Board President, CAADPE; Chief Executive Officer, Tarzana Treatment Centers**

California faces a severe and documented shortage of inpatient substance use disorder treatment capacity. Every month a project is delayed by local opposition is a month in which Californians on treatment waitlists are more likely to relapse, to be incarcerated, to become unhoused, or to die. The evidence does not support the perceived safety concerns cited by opponents. Research from the National Bureau of Economic Research found [no evidence that treatment centers negatively influence residential property values](#), which was recently supported by a [February 2026 study](#). [Multiple studies](#) of sober living homes and recovery residences have found no evidence of increased crime.

CAADPE outlines seven specific legal obligations that apply to every city and county in California: equal access requirements under Title II; prohibitions on discriminatory zoning or permitting conditions; the applicability of disparate impact standards; local government responsibility for the actions of subordinate agencies; protections for sober living and recovery residences under the Fair Housing Act; Section 504 Rehabilitation Act obligations applicable to all federally funded providers; and parallel protections under California state law that in some respects exceed federal requirements.

The association has made its [ADA Advocacy Resource](#) publicly available to equip affected facilities with the legal framework, documentation guidance, and procedural tools needed to assert their rights under the ADA and Fair Housing Act. CAADPE has made clear it will not stand by while member organizations doing life-saving work are blocked by baseless fear, misinformation, and harmful stigma, and is prepared to engage directly with jurisdictions, remind local officials of their obligations under federal civil rights law, and support affected providers in pursuing all available administrative and legal remedies.

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### **About CAADPE**

The California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives (CAADPE) is the statewide association representing substance use disorder treatment providers in California. CAADPE advances policies, partnerships, and practices that strengthen the full continuum of care for individuals and communities impacted by substance use disorders.