

4/9/2020

Good Afternoon REDC Members,

Happy Easter/Passover/Regular Weekend to all of you! Below you will find the policy updates for the week.

Quick Executive Highlights:

- In addition to our direct lobbying efforts, Joint letter has been sent to Congressional leadership for 4th COVID-19 package with REDC's co-leadership on requiring telehealth coverage for ERISA plans at all levels of care (including IOP and PHP), stimulus funding for MH/SUD treatment providers like REDC Members, urging states to provide more flexibility to work across state lines
- While we have supported a COBRA subsidies request with other coalition groups, the request wasn't including from the MH/SUD community before sending to leadership- so Allison is working on a standalone letter on this to go to leadership
 - **Note we will be doing a big Action Alert to push congress on telehealth, COBRA, etc. to include in the COVID-19 4th stimulus package on Wed/Thursday. We'll send a separate email on Tuesday with that info for you to share with your networks!**
- Additionally, the same issue was raised to us for REDC Members who accept TRICARE for IOP and PHP. We've begun working on this at multiple levels too.
- No news this week on when House or Senate Armed Services NDAA markups will be...so still expecting May 1st for House and beginning of June for Senate.

Additional Stimulus Monies and Ongoing Regulatory Corrections—Updates

- The Senate adjourned today after reaching a stalemate on additional funding for small businesses, hospitals and local governments.
 - Republicans presented \$250 billion in new money for small businesses and Democrat's presented their own plan to spend an additional \$250 billion on hospitals and local governments that they wanted coupled with the small business aid.
 - Each party rejected the other's bids for new spending and adjourned.
- The REDC joined a letter (attached) with over 93 organizational partners to HHS Secretary Azar and CMS Administrator Verma requesting the immediate expansion Medicare coverage of telehealth to allow audio-only communications and waive the current Medicare requirement for audio-video connecting during the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- **4th STIMULUS PACKAGE**
 - The REDC co-led two letters this week to House and Senate leadership that included priorities for consideration in the next stimulus package.

- The first letter (attached) requests \$38.5 billion in emergency funding for mental health and substance use disorder providers specifically as they work to manage the influx of MH/SUD care during this stressful period.
 - The CARES Act (3rd stimulus package) gave \$100 billion to hospitals for emergency funding, so the argument we put forth is that this sector needs an infusion of cash too.
- The second letter addresses several concerns of REDC membership including:

Guarantee Patient Access to Telehealth

- All health insurance plans, including all ERISA plans, Medicare and state Medicaid programs, must cover telehealth at parity with in-person care.
- Include all levels of mental health and addiction outpatient care, including intensive outpatient and partial hospitalization care, as well as other types of screening, assessment, treatment, and after-care.
- Audio-only should be fully reimbursed at the same rate as a telehealth visit to ensure that poor internet connectivity or lack of video conferencing ability by seniors and others do not inhibit access to care.
- Out-of-network restrictions and penalties should be temporarily waived for telehealth services.

Improve Parity Compliance (including telehealth)

- Enact existing bi-partisan-supported language agreed to by Senate HELP and House Energy and Commerce to improve compliance with the Federal Parity Act as consumers and providers are reporting telehealth is being covered in different ways for mental health and addiction than for medical/surgical care.
 - \$20 million – EBSA needs dedicated funding to verify equitable coverage of mental health and addiction services (including telehealth).
- AHIP and the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association outlined a series of asks in a letter to Congressional leaders earlier this week (see attached).
 - Priorities include: Reopening the ACA marketplaces and rapidly expanding access to and coverage for telehealth services, including the waiving of cost sharing for telehealth services, to keep patients at home and out of hospital and physician offices.
 - Similarly, House Democrat leaders on the Ways & Means Committee, Energy & Commerce Committee and Education &

Labor Committees sent a letter to the Trump Administration urging for the creation of a special enrollment period on Healthcare.gov so the uninsured and underinsured can have an opportunity to access comprehensive health coverage. The full letter can be read [here](#).

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