

5/28/2020

Good Afternoon REDC Members,

Hope each you enjoyed the Memorial Day weekend. Below is your weekly policy update.

SERVE Act/TRICARE Telehealth

- **SERVE Act: Senate NDAA Mark-up Schedule Announced**
 - The seven Armed Services Subcommittees will approve their portions of the bill on June 8 and June 9.
 - **The Personnel Subcommittee will meet on June 9 at 2:30 pm and is the only markup that is available to the public.**
 - The full committee markup will take place on June 10 with the possibility of extending into June 11.
 - Senate Chairman Inhofe (R-OK) wants the Senate to pass the bill before the July 4 recess.

COVID-19 4TH PACKAGE ISSUES

- I. **32 Bipartisan House Members Urge for Telehealth Flexibilities to Extend Beyond Pandemic**
 - a. Reps. Tom Emmer (R-MN) and Paul Tonko (D-NY) led a letter with the support of 30 other bipartisan colleagues send a letter to Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader McConnell to expand behavioral telehealth services in any upcoming relief package to allow for a reasonable transition period following the COVID-19 emergency period.
 - i. This would allow time to collect appropriate data to determine which flexibilities should be continued permanently.
 - ii. The full letter is attached.
- II. **MHLG Letter to CMS Administrator Verma to Extend Telehealth Flexibilities**
 - a. The REDC joined our MHLG colleagues in a letter to CMS Administrator Verma mirroring the request from Reps. Emmer and Tonko above.

- b. The full letter is attached.

III. Senate Democrats White House Letter on Mental Health Response to COVID-19

- a. Ranking Member Murray (D-WA) and Senator Kaine (D-VA) led a letter to Vice President Pence with the support of 9 other Democratic Senators to address the nation's mental health needs during and following the pandemic. Steps include:
 - i. Integrate information about behavioral health, including suicide prevention, substance use disorder, and mental health, into all relevant resources the federal government releases regarding the response to this public health emergency;
 - ii. Include experts on mental health and suicide prevention in conversations about implementing public health preparedness efforts;
 - iii. Harness all the suicide prevention and mental health resources from HHS, CDC, SAMHSA, DOD, VA, and other relevant agencies to assist in providing necessary mental health care, resources, and recommendations in a way that assists the population with responding to COVID-19
 - iv. Ensure availability of appropriate guidance and resources for congregate care facilities, including psychiatric hospitals and nursing homes;
 - v. Provide resources addressing mental health needs in accessible formats to communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, including communities of color and people with disabilities;
 - vi. Provide resources directed at the mental health needs for frontline workers to communities across the country.

IV. Senate Democrats' Release Plan to Expand Health Care Coverage & Affordability During COVID-19

- a. Senators Smith (D-MN), Shaheen (D-NH) and Ranking Members Wyden (D-OR) and Murray (D-WA) released a proposal with support of 33 Senate Democrats to expand health care coverage and affordability during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- b. The full white paper can be viewed [here](#). A brief overview of the policies included:

- i. Cover all costs for COVID-19 treatment, including for the uninsured;
- ii. Deliver subsidies for the cost of COBRA premiums for the newly unemployed;
- iii. Expand and increase access to premium tax credits that help families afford monthly premiums;
- iv. Incentivize Medicaid expansion in remaining states that have yet to expand;
- v. Establish a special federal enrollment period;
- vi. Ban the sale of junk plans; and
- vii. Restore funding for ACA marketplace outreach and enrollment support.

ACA Watch During COVID-19

- I. Pre-Pandemic Uninsured Rate Was Rising**
 - a. Nearly 31 million Americans lacked health coverage even before the pandemic according to the CDC's National Health Interview Survey.
 - i. Roughly 9.5% of the U.S. was uninsured in the first half of 2019, a figure that's sure to have risen sharply in more recent months as millions lost their jobs and workplace coverage.
 - ii. The new federal survey data underscores the stark disparity in uninsured rates between states that expanded Medicaid and the 14 that haven't. Even in a healthy economy with low unemployment, working-age adults in non-expansion states were twice as likely to be uninsured than those in expansion states.
 - iii. Under the ACA, anyone who loses employer coverage has 60 days to shop for an individual market plan through a special enrollment period. This week marks the sign-up deadline for more than 3

million people among the first wave of workers laid off during the COVID-19 shutdown.

1. Federal data has not been released yet on the newly jobless who bought coverage on Healthcare.gov.
2. Meanwhile, just over 200,000 people enrolled in eight states running their own health insurance marketplaces in recent months.

Best,

Allison

Allison Ivie, MPP/MA

Vice President

Center Road Solutions, L.L.C.