

10/08/2021

Hello REDC Members,

Here is this week's policy update.

## Telehealth

- **REDC Submits Comment to ["A Bold Vision for America's Mental Well-being"](#)**
  - Senators Cornyn (R-TX) and Bennet (D-CO) released a white paper outlining a new framework for reimagining and redesigning how mental and behavioral healthcare is delivered in the U.S.
  - Outside organizations/entities were encouraged to provide feedback on short- and long-term initiatives to improve access and delivery of this care.
  - The full REDC comment is attached and urges for the establishment of telehealth coverage within future ACA plans designs for the delivery of MH/SUD care in addition to payment parity with in-person services.
- **Meeting w/ Sens. Smith (D-MN) and Cassidy (R-LA)**
  - REDC joined the MHLG Telehealth Working Group in a meeting with health staff from the co-leads of the Telemental Health Care Access Act
    - The bill would remove the 6-month in-person requirement prior to accessing mental health services.
    - The staffers said they envision this bill fitting into the Senate Finance mental health package that is under development.
    - Roadblocks: Doesn't have a CBO score as budget reconciliation is taking up everyone's time and bandwidth.
    - Likely that telehealth flexibilities will be extended for an additional 1-2 years in the end of year spending package as Congress will be more interested in a clean funding extension.
- **[Senate Commerce Committee Holds Hearing on Telehealth](#)**
  - Earlier this week, the Senate Commerce Committee held a briefing entitled, "State of Telehealth: Removing Barriers to Access and Improving Patient Outcomes" with speakers from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), American Academy of Family Physicians, Project ECHO Founder and Avel eCARE.
  - The bulk of the hearing focused on scaling up broadband services to reach residents residing in rural states and areas.
  - Speakers from AAFP, Avel eCARE and the FCC Commissioner all agreed that licensure protocols are a barrier to increase telehealth access to individuals who need it.

- Sen. Blunt (R-MO) raised the TREAT Act, which is co-led by Sen. Murphy (D-CT) that would alleviate some of these restrictions.
  - The TREAT Act is endorsed by the REDC.
- **eHealth Initiative Webinar: "Challenges to Delivering (and Receiving) Telehealth Across State Lines"**
  - October 20th, 1 PM EDT
  - Panelists
    - Brian Hasselfeld, MD, Medical Director, Digital Health and Telemedicine, Johns Hopkins Medicine
    - Lisa Robin, MLA, Chief Advocacy Officer, Federation of State Medical Boards
    - Heidi Ross, Director of Policy, National Organization for Rare Diseases
    - Catherine Pugh, Assistant Vice President, Policy, eHI
  - Register [here](#).

## Parity

### • MHLG Mental Health Parity Working Group

- The REDC participated in this meeting and will be throwing its support beyond parity efforts the Kennedy Forum is leading.
- A letter to the National Association on Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) to update their flawed parity tool.
  - NAIC has a market regulation handbook that helps state insurance departments. In 2019, the committee in charge of the handbook issued a mental health parity market regulation chapter.
  - The chapter contains an incredibly flawed and toothless NQTL tool that insurers have latched onto because it is so broad.
  - The Kennedy Forum is drafting a letter to the NAIC committee responsible for the handbook urging them to update this chapter given it is not only flawed but also obsolete given the new parity requirements under the CARES Act.
- The Kennedy Forum is also working on tackling the opt-out issue in states.
- Here is the [list of the 165 plans that have opted out of parity](#).
- If your sites are experiencing difficulties because patients have plans that have opted out, please let us know.
- The Kennedy Forum suggested that we can be working with the states to shame plans that have purposefully decided to provide substandard MH/SUD care.

## NDAAs Status:

- We're still anticipating that the NDAA will be up for a vote on the Senate floor sometime this month. However, Armed Services Committee Chairman Reed says that the bill is ready, so it could be thrown on the floor anytime there's a lull in the action.
- Shaheen and Tillis are ready to introduce the SERVE amendment and we have met with several Senate offices to build support.
  - We've met with the following: Sinema (D-AZ), Collins (R-ME), Burr (R-NC), Blunt (R-MO), Capito (R-WV), Toomey (R-PA), Klobuchar (D-MN)
  - Meeting next week with Kelly (D-AZ) and Tillis (R-NC)
- We've also confirmed Shaheen and Klobuchar as co-leads for our amendment on military health professionals' eating disorders training! Still working on locking down a Republican co-lead!
- Next Steps:
  - **Senate Floor Amendment & Passage:** Senators Shaheen & Tillis will submit the SERVE amendment language and Senators Klobuchar & Shaheen will submit military health ED training language ahead of the Senate Floor vote this month. We will advocate hard and activate grassroots/tops to get both amendments passed!
  - **Conference Negotiations:** Then both the House & Senate NDAA will need to be negotiated (called conferenced) for differences, and have one more vote in both Chambers

**Inseparable** received outreach from the Administration for some key positions they're looking for recommendations. Please reach out to Katrina Velasquez if you have any recommendations.

1. Indian Health Services: Native American candidate with experience in BH/focus on quality improvement.
2. Position under Secretary of Health at the VA Administration: Experience running a healthcare entity.

Have a great weekend!

Best,  
Center Road Solutions Team