

02/11/2022

Hello REDC Members,

Here is this week's policy update.

Telehealth

The Senate Finance Committee held a hearing with you U.S. Surgeon General on the youth mental health crisis this week

- A summary memo is attached for reference.
- Telehealth, mental health parity compliance and the role of social media were highlighted throughout the hearing.
 - Specifically, Senator Murphy (D-CT) raised the issue of parity incompliance with regard to nutrition counseling. It is covered for individuals with diabetes but not for individuals with an eating disorder. Senator Warner (D-VA) detailed the challenges of having a daughter who is a Type 1 diabettic and struggles with an eating disorder.
- Ranking Member Crapo (R-ID) used his opening testimony to discuss telehealth and workforce issues.
- Chairman Wyden (D-OR) added a comment on continuing to advance telehealth ([about 6 minutes](#)).
- Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy said “we shouldn’t go back” on telehealth, and on interstate flexibilities ([about 30 seconds](#)).
- Sen. Thune (R-SD) questioned the Surgeon General’s opinion on telehealth.
 - Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy responded that telehealth “has to be a part of our health care delivery apparatus” ([about 1 minute](#)).

Telehealth Extension and Evaluation Act Introduced

- Sens. Cortez Masto (D-NV) and Young (R-IN) introduced a bill this week that would temporarily extend Medicare telehealth payment flexibilities for an additional two years post-pandemic/the conclusion of the Public Health Emergency.
 - The bill would also mandate HHS study how telehealth flexibilities impact utilization, fraud and access to care in Medicare and Medicaid, and deliver an interim report in 1 year.
 - A final report would come 18 months after the emergency expires.
- A section-by-section of the legislation is attached.
- This bill was introduced shortly after a letter signed by the REDC Consortium with 300+ organizations that a telehealth cliff was approaching if Congress does not act to extend telehealth flexibilities.

- The goal is to have this legislation attached to the omnibus bill that is currently in works for a mid-March passage, which would finalize funding for this fiscal year.

Amazon Rolls Out Telehealth Service Nationwide

- Known as Amazon Care, the telehealth service is now available nationwide.
 - The service launched in 2019 as a pilot program for employees in and around the company's Seattle HQs.
 - The program provides virtual-care visits, as well as free telehealth consultations and in-home visits for a fee from nurses for testing and vaccinations.
 - It has since expanded into more of a primary care service.
 - Additionally, Amazon is expanding in-person care to more cities across the U.S. later this year.
 - It plans to launch in 20 cities including NY, SF, Miami and Chicago.
 - Amazon Care is entering a crowded space, which includes insurers.
 - Anthem expanded virtual primary care services in 11 states including GA, KY, OH and NY.
 - UnitedHealthcare, CVS Health's Aetna division and Cigna, all now offer employers virtual primary care plans which they tout as programs to help employees manage chronic conditions and save costs.

Healthcare Workforce Shortage

The Senate HELP Committee, Subcommittee on Employment and Workplace Safety held a hearing on the healthcare workforce shortage crisis.

- A summary memo of this hearing is attached for reference.

SERVE Act

- We are crafting a letter from REDC to the Department of Defense to encourage speedy implementation that is aligned with our and Congress' intent.

Have a great weekend,

Center Road Solutions Team