

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