

03/18/2022

Hello REDC Members,

Here is this week's policy update.

REDC Advocacy Day Registration

- Tuesday, April 26th from 9am to 4pm EST
- Required training on Monday, April 25th from 3pm to 4pm.
- **Register here:** <https://redcadvocacyday.eventbrite.com>
- Registration open till April 1st.

Telehealth

Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) Recommends More Mandated Telehealth Data Reporting

- The influential MedPAC unanimously recommended to Congress that HHS require health care organizations to report more information on telehealth use to help policymakers weigh the future of virtual care.
 - The commission called for hospice providers and home health agencies to report virtual care services provided to patients on Medicare.
 - It also recommended CMS mandate that clinicians differentiate between audio-only and video-enabled telehealth visits when reporting care.
- As stated last week, Congress passed broad expansions of telehealth access for five months after the public health emergency. The earliest the emergency would likely expire is July. If it were to expire then, Congress would be slated to consider telehealth policy during a potential lame-duck session.
- MedPaC has been cautious about expanding telehealth; however, they reported that 89% of beneficiaries surveyed said they were “very or somewhat satisfied” with their telehealth appointments.
 - About half of those surveyed said they’d want to keep using virtual care post-Covid-19 PHE.

New Analysis Finds Telehealth Continues to Account for More Than 1/3 of OP MH/SUD Services

- A [new analysis](#) from Kaiser Family Foundation and Epic Research finds that telehealth visits for outpatient MH/SUD services went from virtually 0% in 2019 to a peak of 40% in mid-2020—and continued to account for more than 1/3 (36%) of such visits in the six months ending in August 2021.

- MH/SUD services accounted for 39% of all telehealth outpatient visits in the 6-month period between March and August 2021, about 5x the share of all other outpatient visits.
- This reflects the tremendous increase in need for mental health services as a result of the pandemic.
- A relatively high share of patients in rural areas relied on telehealth to receive outpatient MH/SUD services (55%) compared to those in urban areas (35%).
- 62% of the visits performed for MH/SUD via telehealth were among people in the 19-64 age group.

INSURANCE

Department of Justice Trial Against UnitedHealth Merger Slated for August 1

- The DOJ suit to block UnitedHealth Group from acquiring health IT company Change Healthcare will head to trial August 1.
- The merger challenge is the Biden Administration's first in the health care space, seeking to prohibit the U.S.'s largest health insurer and third largest company overall from buying the leading independent insurance claim reimbursement network.
- Prosecutors alleged the deal would give UnitedHealth access to too much sensitive data about its rivals.

Parity Legislative and Regulatory Compliance Workgroup

- Federal Updates
 - President Biden discussed mental health/substance use disorder prominently in his SOTU.
 - White House Face Sheet released the same day highlighted parity: "expand and strengthen parity"
 - Budget proposal will contain key details on exact proposals. Taken to logical conclusion, parity in all health plans would include traditional Medicaid, TRICARE, and Medicare, as well as ending opts-outs.
 - Hopefully, WH will continue to affirm DOL's recommendation for parity fine authority.
- State Information is attached for specific legislation.

Anthem to Change Name to Elevance Health

- Pending stockholder approval, the health insurance company known as Anthem plans to become Elevance Health.
- The names of the health plans at Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield will not change; however, the company said it will "streamline the number of other brands in the market to reduce complexities and improve consumer experience."
- The company said the rebrand is the first step in an effort to optimize the company's portfolio, which serves 118 million consumers.

Have a great weekend!

Best,

Center Road Solutions Team