

09/16/2022

Hello REDC Members,

Here is this week's policy update.

TELEHEALTH

Telehealth Awareness Week is NEXT WEEK!

REDC Serving as a Supporting Partner for Telehealth Awareness Week

- Telehealth Awareness Week (Sept. 18-24) is quickly approaching and the REDC is a partner org for the event. We welcome REDC members to take part in the #TelehealthIsHealth campaign on social media.
- **Attached is the custom REDC social media graphic** REDC members can use to highlight your role as an endorsing partner. The full social media toolkit for use can be [found here](#).

REDC Leads and Supports Telehealth Congressional Efforts

The REDC led a Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) letter to Senate Finance Committee Chair Wyden (D-OR) and Ranking Member Crapo (R-ID) this week.

- The letter urges the committee to advance the bipartisan Advancing Telehealth Beyond COVID-19 Act (H.R. 4040) that passed the House in July.
- H.R. 4040 would extend the Medicare telehealth flexibilities that have been afforded through the PHE an additional two years once the PHE declaration concludes. The bill would also delay implementation of the Medicare's 6 month in person requirement to access telemental health services for 2 years.
- The full letter is attached.

The REDC co-signed a letter with 375 organizations urging Senate action on telehealth flexibilities this fall and was sent to Congress this week.

- The letter was led by the Alliance for Connected Care, American Telemedicine Association, College of Healthcare Information Management Executives, Connected Health Initiative, Consumer Technology Association, Executives for Health Innovation, Health Innovation Alliance, HIMSS, and the Partnership to Advance Virtual Care.
- The letter references H.R. 4040 and received numerous press hits given the wide ranging support of the signatories.
- The full letter is attached.

Blue Cross Cuts Telehealth Reimbursement in Nebraska

- Nebraska Hospital Association is sounding the alarm over a reimbursement cut for telehealth services by the state's largest health insurer, BCBS of Nebraska.
 - The insurers decided to cut telehealth visits by 50% as of July 1.
 - It is not clear if any other health insurers plan to follow suit; however, NHA is worried the devastating cut will put an end to telehealth services in the state.

[JAMA Study Finds 65% of Medicare Patients Sought Telehealth Across State Lines](#)

- Between the study period of January and June 2021, about 8.4 million Medicare patients had a telehealth visit, and about 5% in that group met with clinicians out of state.
- Nearly 40% of out-of-state visits were for primary care, while 25% were for mental health.
- Compared to patients who only received telemedicine in-state, people who received virtual care across state lines were more likely to live in rural communities than urban or suburban ones—34% vs. 21%.
- The American Medical Association favors the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact that many states have joined. It makes it easier to apply for licensing across state lines by serving as a common application.
 - The telehealth industry is divided with some favoring a licensing system similar to the AMA.
 - HHS Secretary Becerra has called on Congress to pass legislation permitting cross-state visits.
- The researchers found that most visits across state lines are part of an established provider-patient relationship and that restrictions on out-of-state care may disrupt many existing relationships in primary care and mental health treatment.

Former U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary Urges for Removal of State Line Barriers to Health Care

- Former VA Secretary Shulkin wrote an [op-ed](#) on how state borders present arbitrary barriers in accessing care.
 - The op-ed highlights how Veterans are able to receive care from licensed health care providers via telehealth nationwide, regardless of where they are located.
 - During the pandemic, all 50 states used emergency authority to amend their licensing requirements for out-of-state practitioners,
 - The pandemic proved that providing the flexibility to practice care across state lines improves access to care while maintaining patient safety.
 - The VA has shown the way forward in modernizing licensing in this respect, and the same should be done for all Americans.

INSURANCE & ACCESS TO CARE

[Satcher Health Leadership Institute Report on Costs of Mental Health Inequity](#)

- The Institute housed at the Morehouse School of Medicine found that between, 2016 and 2020, more than 116,000 premature deaths among indigenous populations and racial and ethnic minority groups were related to mental and behavioral health.
- The excess cost burden of those deaths due to suicide, mental illness and substance abuse was **\$278 billion**.
- The report found **nearly 6 million** people are regularly excluded from federal estimates of mental and behavioral health because of the failure to take into account incarcerated populations, nursing home residents, residents of assisted-living facilities, the unhoused, active members of the military and people institutionalized in psychiatric facilities.
- Among the **drivers** of the inequities, the study lists structural barriers to health care access, cultural differences in pursuing behavioral healthcare, biased delivery of care and social and political determinants of health, such as poverty or not having health care insurance.

Have a great weekend!
Center Road Solutions Team