

09/30/2022

Hello REDC Members,

Here is this week's policy update.

## **PARITY**

### **Mental Health Matters Act Moves to House Floor**

- The REDC signed in support of a letter led by the Kennedy Forum for the Mental Health Matters Act (H.R. 7780) that passed the U.S. House of Representatives today largely along party lines.
- Specifically, the letter supports Titles VI and VII of the bill:
  - Title VI would provide civil monetary penalty authority to the U.S. Department of Labor to enforce federal parity law.
  - Title VII would prohibit ERISA plans from inserting provisions into plan policies (except when agreed to as part of bona fide collective bargaining agreements) that force beneficiaries into mandatory binding arbitrations. The expansion of these clauses threatens to undermine Americans' ability to challenge wrongful coverage denials in court.
- The letter is attached.

### **U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR ROUNDTABLE ON MENTAL HEALTH PARITY AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT**

- As last week's update noted, our team represented the REDC at a roundtable held by the U.S. Department of Labor last Friday.
- The summary memo of the discussion is attached.

## **TELEHEALTH**

### **HHS HOSTING EXPERT PANEL TO EXAMINE POLICY OPTIONS TO SUPPORT CONTINUED DELIVERY OF TELE-BEHAVIORAL SERVICES ACROSS STATE LINES**

- The expert panel will take place on October 13 from 1-5 pm ET and is hosted by HHS' Office of Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE).
- ASPE has asked RTI International to organize a technical expert panel to explore policy options that encourage reciprocity and portability of licenses for behavioral health providers, including a telehealth license portability compact that is multidisciplinary (e.g., psychiatrists, licensed professional counselors, social workers, psychiatric nurse practitioners); and focuses on the delivery of mental health and substance use disorder services.
- Experts attending on October 13 are attached.

## **JAMA Network Paper Finds Telehealth Provided Similar or “Significantly Better” Quality Compared to In-person Visits in 13 of 16 Categories**

- The study was conducted between March 1, 2020 and November 30, 2021 finding more than 80% of telehealth primary care visits were comparable or “significantly better” quality compared to traditional, in-person primary care visits.
- The study analyzed the experience of more than 500,000 patients across 16 different types of clinical visits.
  - Interestingly, patients seeing a clinician via telemedicine had twice the odds of receiving a depression screening versus an in-person encounter.
- The full paper can be read [here](#).

## **JAMA NETWORK STUDY FINDS TELEHEALTH UTILIZATION LEADS TO INCREASED ACCESS TO QUALITY CARE FOR THOSE WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS**

- The study was conducted by researchers from Harvard Medical School, Stanford University, McLean Hospital, RAND Health, and Veteran Affairs Greater Los Angeles Health System.
- The study surveyed 118,670 Medicare beneficiaries with schizophrenia or related mental health conditions between January 1, 2010, and December 31, 2018.
- In addition to finding an increase in quality care, the researchers also found that telehealth improved the likelihood of follow-up after hospitalization among those studied.
  - However, there was no increase in medication adherence, and there was an increase in mental health hospitalizations.
- The full paper can be read [here](#).

## **BIPARTISAN REP PEN OP-ED HIGHLIGHTING TELEHEALTH EXPANSION ACT (H.R. 5981/S. 1704)**

- Reps. Steel (R-CA) and Lee (D-NV) penned an [op-ed](#) highlighting their bill the Telehealth Expansion Act, which would provide permanency for patients who have high-deductible health plans coupled with a health savings account (HDHP-HSA) seek covered telehealth services without first reaching their deductible.
  - The provision was one of the many flexibilities over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and the provision expired on December 31, 2021. Congress was able to secure an extension of this policy in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2022, but only until the end of the year.

## **SENATOR SULLIVAN (R-AK) INTRODUCES BILL TO PERMANENTLY REMOVE IN-PERSON TELE-MENTAL HEALTH REQUIREMENT UNDER MEDICARE**

- The legislation would permanently waive a federal provision requiring seniors who are seeking mental health services to have an in-person visit within the last six months before receiving services virtually.
- The legislation is the Senate companion bill from Reps. Hern (R-OK), Curtis (R-UT) and Bacon (R-NE) that passed within H.R. 4040 (which REDC supported) out of the U.S. House of Representatives in July.

## **SERVE ACT**

### **REDC SUBMITS TESTIMONY FOR HOUSE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HEARING ON SUICIDE PREVENTION**

- The EDC and REDC were invited to submit testimony ahead of a hearing this morning entitled, “Veteran Suicide Prevention: Capitalizing on What Works and Increasing Innovative Approaches.”
- The testimony submission is attached for reference.
- To view a recording of the hearing, you can find the video [here](#).

Best,

Center Road Solutions Team