



December 20, 2016

**Medicare Reimbursement:**

**Improving Access to Mental Health Act of 2015 (S.2173/H.R. 3712)**

Since launching our action alert in October, 2015, 1,944 advocates sent 6,475 emails to Congress about the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 2173/H.R. 3712)*. You can find the alert on our [web site](#). Please consider sending an [editable email](#) to your Members of Congress.

During the lame duck session, NASW members worked on securing GOP support for the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act of 2015 (S.2173/H.R. 3712)*, which is important to social workers nationwide.

An [action alert](#) was sent to Advocacy Listserv members on November 16 asking them to contact their Senators about passing Mental Health Reform and including the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act* with in the broader reform. NASW joined with other mental health organizations in a week of action around Mental Health Reform spearheaded by the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, NAMI, Mental Health America, Sandy Hook Promise, and the Eating Disorders Coalition. Through NASW efforts over the last year, 2,318 advocates sent 5,922 emails to Congress about Mental Health Reform.

Co-sponsors of the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act* include: (\*\* indicates original sponsor; \* indicates original cosponsor)

*Senate*

- Sen. Stabenow, Debbie [D-MI]\*\* 10/08/2015
- Sen. Mikulski, Barbara A. [D-MD]\* 10/08/2015

- Sen. Murphy, Christopher S. [D-CT] 02/25/2016
- Sen. Blumenthal, Richard [D-CT] 04/07/2016

#### *House of Representatives*

- Rep. Lee, Barbara [D-CA-13]\*\* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Ashford, Brad [D-NE-2] 12/09/2015
- Rep. Bordallo, Madeleine Z. [D-GU-At Large]\* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Brown, Corrine [D-FL-5]\* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Capuano, Michael E. [D-MA-7] 09/06/2016
- Rep. Clarke, Yvette D. [D-NY-9]\* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Cohen, Steve [D-TN-9] 10/16/2015
- Rep. DeFazio, Peter A. [D-OR-4] 04/11/2016
- Rep. Grijalva, Raul M. [D-AZ-3]\* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Gutierrez, Luis V. [D-IL-4] 10/16/2015
- Rep. Honda, Michael M. [D-CA-17]\* 10/08/2015
- Rep. McCollum, Betty [D-MN-4] 12/09/2015
- Rep. Moore, Gwen [D-WI-4] 10/16/2015
- Rep. Norton, Eleanor Holmes [D-DC-At Large]\* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Schakowsky, Janice D. [D-IL-9] 10/20/2015
- Rep. Serrano, Jose E. [D-NY-15] 03/14/2016
- Rep. Watson Coleman, Bonnie [D-NJ-12]\* 10/08/2015

NASW has secured supporters of the legislation, listed below:

- American Geriatrics Society
- Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
- Clinical Social Work Association
- Council on Social Work Education
- Justice in Aging
- NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
- National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders
- National Coalition for Care Coordination (N3C)
- National League for Nursing
- The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

#### **Other Legislative Work:**

##### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act**

On December 13, 2016, President Obama signed into law the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act, including provisions from Mental Health Reform legislation. This comes after broad bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. NASW was one of the select groups present for the Congressional press conference to highlight the prevention aspects of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures and the bipartisan work Congress did to build upon mental health parity. Members of Congress in attendance included:

- Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN)
- Senator John Cornyn (R-TX)
- Senator Christopher Murphy (D-CT)
- Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA)
- Congressman Fred Upton (R-MI-06)
- Congressman Tim Murphy (R-PA-18)
- Congresswoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX-30)

In a strong grassroots effort, NASW mobilized over 2,300 social workers to advocate for Mental Health Reform legislation.

### **Criminal Justice**

On December 1, 2016, NASW, in partnership with the American Psychological Association (APA), presented at a briefing to introduce the Consensus Working Group Recommendations to the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress and the Trump Administration on criminal justice and behavioral health issues. The consensus working group, who contributed to the document, is comprised of over twenty organizations. The briefing included statements by Senator Al Franken (D-MN), Interim CEO of APA: Cynthia D. Belar, PhD, , and Heidi McIntosh, the Deputy Director of Programs at NASW.

The Consensus Working Group will continue to work on criminal justice mental health/behavioral health issues in the coming year. Meetings will occur on a quarterly basis, with the next meeting in late January.

### **Electoral Work Wrap-Up:**

#### **NASW-PACE Endorsements**

NASW-PACE endorsed 171 federal candidates. There were 157 wins (91.8%) and 14 losses (8.2%). To view a list of endorsed candidates with race results, visit the [PACE page](#) on the NASW website.

#### **NASW-PACE Phone Banks**

As previously reported, the NASW-PACE began phone banking with volunteers contacting members in Illinois, New Hampshire, and North Carolina. Our final tally for total calls is 1,054. Thank you to all of those who volunteered on this important outreach effort.

### **Election Results**

On Monday, December 19, 2016 the Electoral College met and solidified Donald J. Trump's victory of 306 electoral votes to be the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. With all votes in, including the run off races in Louisiana, Republicans maintained control of both the Senate and the House. In the Senate, there are 52 Republicans, 46 Democrats and 2 Independents that will caucus with the Democrats. In the House the new majority stands at 241 Republicans to 194 Democrats.

## **Voters Rights**

NASW Social Justice staff, along with other national coalitions, participated in a meeting highlighting the concern for protecting voting rights, especially during the 2016 national elections. Key concerns were with issues of voter ID laws, voter intimidation, voter suppression, and the impact of gerrymandered voting districts. In October 2016, the NASW Social Justice Department staff issued a [brief on the topic of voter rights](#). The brief was disseminated to coincide with the November elections.

### **Administrative Work:**

#### **Criminal Justice**

On December 8, 2016, NASW social justice staff joined a meeting with the Commissioner of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) on the issue of solitary confinement. The meeting had implications for policy and practice for social workers. There is a national trend toward reforming solitary confinement in the direction of limiting its use, and moving toward a more clinical approach for mentally ill inmates placed in isolation. NASW discussed expanding the BOP workforce to include clinical social workers.

#### **Health Disparities**

NASW social justice staff worked in partnership with the NASW senior policy associate on health issues to collaborate with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and the White House Office of Public Engagement to highlight the role of social workers in the Affordable Care Act Open Enrollment. The focus was on helping to get marginalized and hard to reach populations, such as low-income minorities, homeless, and justice, enrolled in the Medicaid expansion part of “Obamacare”. The relationship with the Office of Public Engagement and CMS culminated in a national conference call to social workers on how social workers can help with open enrollment. NASW’s CEO, Angelo McClain participated on the national conference call.

### **Coalition Work:**

NASW participated in coalition work with:

- Eldercare Workforce Alliance
- Leadership Council of Aging Organizations
- Malnutrition Quality
- Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- Coalition on Human Needs
- Mental Health Liaison Group

#### **Mental Health Liaison Group Meeting - November**

1. **Implementing Trauma Informed Approaches to Prevent Aversive Interventions – Joan Gillece, Ph.D., Director, National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors Center for Innovation in Trauma Informed Approaches**

Dr. Gillice oversees the National Center for Trauma Informed Care for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). A common thread in criminal justice system work is early unresolved trauma. The key is to understand meaning in behavior and not to pathologize behavior. There should be a focus on comfort rather than control. Dr. Gillice talked about a culture shift needed in criminal justice organizations, including a strengths-based approach. She talked about prisons that have started to ask what inmates value and provide settings that are more conducive to comfort than control. For example, one prison has painted cells with scenes that reduce anxiety.

**2. Stress in America™ Survey – Sophie Behtune, Deputy, Public Relations & Special projects, Practice Directorate, American Psychological Association**

This is a ten-year project, started in 2006, that looks at mind-body health. The APA will release the full results in February. In addition to this long-range study, APA released data on October 13<sup>th</sup> about the election and stress. This polling data included 3,500 participants and found that 52% of respondents were experiencing somewhat or serious stress related to the election. The results were equal between Republicans and Democrats. The stress level was slightly lower for people who do not identify with either party.

APA has had over 2,400 media stories about the results.

**3. Organization Introductions**

The National Council for Behavioral Health and Sandy Hook Promise introduced their organizations.

**4. Coalition Updates**

- The MHLG Annual meeting is on December 15, 2016.
- There is a Mental Health Reform bill support letter.
- November 14-18 is the grassroots advocacy push for Mental Health Reform
- Next MHLG meeting is December 2, 2016.

**Mental Health Liaison Group Meeting – December**

**1. Mental Health Mondays – Jonah Cunningham, Legislative Assistant, Office of Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano**

Mental Health Mondays is an initiative of Congresswoman Grace Napolitano that started in 2016. This monthly Capitol Hill briefing is meant to engage and educate members of Congress and their staff on mental health issues. Topics in 2016 ranged from an Introduction to SAMHSA (the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) to Treatments for Mental Illness, and College Mental Health. The Congresswoman is looking to continue Mental Health Mondays in 2017.

**2. Consensus Workgroup on Behavioral Health Issues in Criminal Justice – Melvin H. Wilson, MSW, Manager, Department of Social Justice and Human Rights, National Association of Social Workers**

The Consensus Workgroup, comprised of 16 stakeholders, is working on policy recommendations to the incoming Administration. The workgroup's focus is on jails as they have become a default mental health system for many Americans. The next meeting is in mid-January.

**3. Out-of-Network, Out-of-Pocket, Out-of-Options: The Unfulfilled Promise of Mental Health Parity – Dania Douglas, JD, Manager, Policy & State Outreach Advocacy & Public Policy, National Alliance on Mental Illness**

NAMI conducted a Coverage for Care Survey in 2015 to answer the question, "What do insurance beneficiaries experience when they seek mental health care?" The results were based on a convenience sample of over 3,000 respondents with public or private health insurance coverage. They found that people with mental health and substance use conditions have a difficult time finding in-network mental health and substance use providers. They also found that out-of-pocket costs for mental health and substance use care were higher than for comparable types of medical-surgical care.

The recommendations from the survey are:

- a. Insurance providers need to maintain accurate, up-to-date provider directories, that they need to provide easy-to-understand information about mental health benefits,
- b. Promote integration of mental health and primary care,
- c. Expand mental health provider networks, and
- d. Cover out-of-network care to fill provider gaps.

The 2016 survey is open now at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/coverage4care2016>.

**4. Organization Introductions**

The Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice (formerly the American Orthopsychiatric Association) and the American Occupational Therapy Association introduced their organizations.

**5. Transition Team Discussion and Coalition Updates**

A small working group was established to develop a transition document that would be complete by January 2017.

**Support Letters:**

NASW has signed onto a number of letters of support. You can find a list of letters of support on our [web page](#). A sample from the last few months is listed below.

- [NASW signs on to ARCH National Respite Coalition transition brief supporting the Lifespan Respite Care Program \(12/14/2016\)](#)
- [NASW signs onto Mental Health Liaison Group Letter in support of Mental Health Reform \(12/2/16\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging Senate leaders to preserve funding for the State Health Insurance Assistance Programs \(SHIP\) in fiscal year 2017 \(11/17/2016\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging House and Senate leaders to preserve funding for the Senior Community Service Employment Program \(SCSEP\) in fiscal year 2017 \(11/16/2016\)](#)
- [NASW Signs Letter in Support of Mental Health Reform \(11/14/2016\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging House and Senate appropriations committees to support eligibility for Section 202 properties with Project Rental Assistance Contracts to participate in the Rental Assistance Demonstration program, thereby preserving affordable housing for older adults with low incomes \(10/24/2016\)](#)

NASW has also submitted its own comments to the Administration and Congress. You can find this list on our [web page](#) as well.

- [NASW Response to the Social Security Administration Proposed Rule on Approved Medical Sources \(11/08/2016\)](#)

The 115<sup>th</sup> Congress commences on January 3, 2017.