

February 2020

Congress: Advancing the Profession



Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 782/H.R. 1533):

This legislation will provide a crucial step forward in access to mental health care for Medicare beneficiaries and in advancing pay equity for social workers. If you have not already done so, please [email your lawmakers](#) now to urge them to cosponsor.

Protecting Social Workers and Health Professionals from Workplace Violence Act (S. 2880/H.R. 5138): Since introduction on November 18th, nine additional cosponsors signed onto this bipartisan legislation. The legislation will create a federal grant program within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to enable employers to purchase and deploy safety equipment (such as security cameras and GPS locators), make facility improvements, implement safety training programs, and provide support services for professionals who have been victims of violence. There is no state or local match required for these grants. [Contact your congressional lawmakers](#) and urge them to cosponsor this legislation.

Workplace Violence Prevention for Health Care and Social Service Workers Act (H.R. 1309): After passing the House in November, this legislation is now pending consideration in the U.S. Senate. Please contact your Senators and urge them to cosponsor the companion bill, [S. 851](#), by responding to NASW's [action alert](#). S. 851/H.R. 1309 will require OSHA to institute a standard requiring employers to develop and implement workplace safety plans. If passed, these measures will be instrumental in promoting safer working conditions for millions of social workers, nurses and other similar professionals who experience unacceptably high levels of violence on the job.

The Employer Participation in Repayment Act (S. 460/H.R. 1043): NASW promotes loan debt relief for social workers as part of its ongoing work to improve working conditions, salaries, and other benefits for members of the profession and to ensure that consumers have access to qualified professionals. S. 460/HR 1043 will help social workers pay off their loan debt faster by enabling employers to contribute up to \$5,250 tax-free annually to their employees' student

loans – providing employees with much-needed relief and employers with a unique tool to attract and retain talented employees. Stay tuned for details on how to engage your lawmaker!

Congress: Social Justice

National Suicide Prevention & Mental Health Hotline (9-8-8): NASW supports the establishment of 9-8-8 as the National Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Hotline. Multiple bills have been introduced in Congress to make this a reality:

- The Campaign to Prevent Suicide Act (H.R.4585), will enable an educational campaign to advertise the new number and raise awareness for suicide prevention resources and cultivate a more effective discourse on how to prevent suicide.
- The Suicide Prevention Lifeline Improvement Act (H.R.4564) will ensure the Lifeline can provide effective and timely responses to people in distress.
- The National Suicide Hotline Designation Act (H.R. 4194) will formally designate the number and creates the telecommunications infrastructure to implement the number.

Social Determinants of Health: [NASW signs on to letter with Aligning for Health in support of the Social Determinants Accelerator Act \(H.R. 4004\)](#), a bill that would provide funding and assistance for community-based organizations to address the social determinants of health.

Older Americans Act (OAA) Reauthorization: OAA reauthorization took a major step forward in late January when Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and Robert P. Casey, Jr. (D-PA), introduced a bicameral compromise bill, the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020, an amendment in the nature of a substitute to H.R. 4334. Grassroots advocacy is essential to maintaining Congressional momentum. [Read NASW's letter of support](#) and [contact your Members of Congress](#) today to thank them for their OAA reauthorization efforts and to urge them to pass the Supporting Older Americans Act of 2020 without delay.

Medical Expense Savings Act (S. 110): This [NASW-supported bill](#) benefits people with high out-of-pocket medical expenses by reducing the federal tax deduction threshold for such expenses to 7.5 percent of Adjusted Gross Income in 2019 and 2020, rather than the 10 percent rate instituted by the [Tax Cuts and Jobs Act](#) (2017) (P.L. 115-97). The temporary decrease in the medical expense deduction threshold passed as part of the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020](#) (P.L. 116-93), signed into law in late December.

Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act of 2019 (H.R. 3): Passed by the House of Representatives in December and [awaiting action in the Senate](#), [this NASW-supported bill](#) would improve prescription drug access and affordability for Medicare beneficiaries and reinvest resulting savings by expanding Medicare coverage to include dental, hearing, and vision services.

Protecting Older Workers Against Discrimination Act (S. 485/H.R. 1230): This [NASW-supported, bipartisan bill](#) would strengthen the ability of workers to seek redress for age-based

employment discrimination and retaliation. The bill [passed the House of Representatives](#) in January and has been [referred to the Senate](#) for action. If passed by the Senate and signed into law, the legislation would also benefit people filing employment discrimination and retaliation claims under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Regulatory

Proposed CY 2021 Reimbursement Cuts: The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services in its final rule on the Physician Fee Schedule for CY 2020 has proposed changes in reimbursement that may result in reductions in reimbursement for certain services. A 6% reduction for psychotherapy services has been proposed by CMS. NASW is working closely with other organizations to fight this proposed cut.

Executive

PREVENTS Task Force on Veteran Suicide: The President's PREVENTS Task Force has accepted numerous recommendations from NASW for its Roadmap on preventing suicide among Veterans. The Roadmap will be provided to the President in March. NASW is also undertaking several other efforts around suicide prevention. Stay tuned for more details!

Climate Change: NASW signed on to a [letter](#) to President Trump asking the United States to return to the Paris Climate Agreement.



Older Americans Month: Start planning now for Older Americans Month, observed each May. The 2020 theme, established by the Administration for Community Living (ACL), is *Make Your Mark*. This theme encourages and celebrates the countless contributions that older adults make within our communities. It also underscores the difference everyone can make in the lives of older adults, in support of family caregivers, and to strengthen communities. Use ACL's Older Americans Month materials to bolster your policy efforts in aging.

Collaboration

Collaboration to Address Serious Mental Illness (SMI): NASW participated in the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) inaugural meeting of their **Task Force on Interprofessional Collaboration** in January. The effort will produce joint principles to promote effective collaboration to increase access to high-quality treatment for persons with SMI.

Voices for Non-Opioid Choices: NASW has joined the Voices for Non-Opioid Choices coalition. Voices is a non-partisan coalition comprised of 30 organizations committed to supporting and

drafting policies and measures to address the opioid epidemic by encouraging the use of non-opioid analgesics for managing acute pain. One of the most effective ways to reduce opioid addiction is to stop it before it starts by offering non-opioid medications for pain management.

Climate Change and Mental Health: NASW in January met with a number of other national mental health-related organizations to discuss potential collaboration around the mental health implications of climate change.

Federal Holocaust Survivor Care Grants Awarded: In late January, on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) Center for Advancing Holocaust Survivor Care announced the award of 45 subgrants to enhance person-centered, trauma-informed services for Holocaust survivors. NASW served on the review committee for the program, which is the first and only federally supported grant program designed to help Holocaust survivors age in their homes and communities.



Discount Available for National Conference on Aging: The American Society on Aging offers NASW members a 10% discount on registration for its 2020 *Aging in America* conference, which will take place in Atlanta on March 23 through 27. Join nearly 3,000 professionals working with or on behalf of older adults to learn about the theme *Aging*

2020: Examining the Needs of Today's Diverse Older Adults. Participate in sessions addressing numerous practice, programmatic, policy, and research topics, including the workshop **"Integrating Health and Social Care: Implications for the Eldercare Workforce"** and a **social work peer group discussion**, both cofacilitated by NASW members and national office staff. Earn up to 20 CEs (NASW approval, **recognized by more than 38 licensure boards**, pending) at no additional charge beyond conference registration. Use the discount code *NASW10* when registering to obtain the fee reduction. **Register** by February 17 to obtain additional savings.

Learn How to Communicate Effectively About Elder Abuse. The **Reframing Elder Abuse Project**, an initiative of the **National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)** and the **FrameWorks Institute**, strives to change cultural discourse about elder abuse and build support for systemic solutions to the problem. NASW has provided input on the initiative since 2016 as a member of the Reframing Elder Abuse Committee. FrameWorks and NCEA have created a dynamic **video lecture series**, available on demand, to introduce professionals to the reframing elder abuse research and communications strategy. This series is available, free of charge, until June 30, 2020. To obtain the discount, add the course to your cart and, during the checkout process, enter the discount code *WEAAD2020*. Interested in tips for reframing elder abuse on social media? Access a free, **on-demand Webinar** presented by NCEA and sponsored by the National Adult Protective Services Association.



NASW Resources

NASW recently published three Practice Alerts for Clinical Social Workers:

- [Attention Clinical Social Workers: Avoid Medicare Claim Rejections in 2020](#)
- [2020 Updates on Medicare and Other Matters for Clinical Social Workers in Private Practice](#)
- [Helping Your Clients Navigate Medicare Open Enrollment](#)

Get Involved! We encourage you to join [NASW's Advocacy Listserv](#) to stay up-to-date on legislative, regulatory and other activity at the Federal level. We also have a variety of valuable [resources](#) on our web page to guide members in connecting with their lawmakers.

For questions about the Washington Update or to suggest content that you would like us to consider for inclusion in a future communication, please contact Dina Kastner, Senior Field Organizer, at dkastner.nasw@socialworkers.org.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest membership organization of professional social workers representing the interests of over 700,000 social workers nationwide. We promote, develop and protect the practice of social work and social workers and enhance the well-being of individuals, families, and communities through advocacy. [Become a member of NASW.](#)



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