



February 11, 2016

President's Budget

On February 9, 2016, the President Obama released his final budget for FY 2017. Social work was mentioned in a number of sections.

The Budget invests \$15 billion in new funding over the next 10 years to extend and expand evidence-based, voluntary home visiting programs, which enable nurses, social workers, and other professionals to work with new and expecting parents to help families track their children's healthy development and learning, connect them to services to address any issues, and utilize good parenting practices that foster healthy development and later school success.

The Budget also provides funding to help improve the training and skills of the child welfare workforce, individuals working with some of the most vulnerable children and youth in the Nation, including funding to help caseworkers obtain a Bachelor or Master's degree in social work and incentivize State child welfare agencies to hire and retain caseworkers with this specialized education.

The Budget includes \$500 million in new mandatory funding over two years to help engage individuals with serious mental illness in care, improve access to care by increasing service capacity and the behavioral health workforce, and ensure that behavioral health care systems work for everyone.

Meetings with Legislative Offices

On January 14, staff met with staff of Rep. Tom Price (R-GA-6) for the Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 2173/H.R. 3712). Rep. Price is on the Health Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee.

The Georgia chapter is following up with Rep. Price and Sen. Isakson's offices.

Other Legislative Activity

Since launching our action alert in October, 2015, 1,590 advocates sent 5,165 emails to Congress about the Improving Access to Mental Health Act. You can find the alert on our [web site](#).

In late January, NASW submitted comments on improving chronic care for Medicare beneficiaries to the Senate Committee on Finance's Bipartisan Chronic Care Working Group. Further clarification on these comments will be in next month's update and posted on NASW's website.

Presidential Candidate Forum Focused on Aging

On February 17 the [Leadership Council of Aging Organizations](#) (LCAO), of which NASW is a member, will sponsor a forum for the 2016 presidential candidates to address aging issues. The forum is not a debate. Rather, each candidate will have individual stage time to provide her or his perspectives on aging issues, without reactions from other candidates. Because of space limitations, participation in the invitational event will be limited to representatives of LCAO member organizations and select advocates from the metropolitan Washington, DC, area. However, people from around the country can be involved in the event in multiple ways. Please encourage your members to visit [Seniors Decide 2016](#) to learn how they—and their clients who care about aging issues—can [submit questions](#) to the candidates, participate in the event by [live stream](#), organize a [watch party](#), and encourage the candidates to attend the forum. More than 250 watch parties have been registered and 1,000 questions submitted to date.

Mental Health Liaison Group (MHLG) Meeting

NASW staff attended the February MHLG meeting. Below are the topics discussed.

1. Coordinating Crisis Care Act (H.R. 4349); Jeff Morgan, JD, Legislative Director, Office of Congressman Paul D. Tonko (D-NY-20)

The act establishes a \$15 million grant program for states to develop a bed registry for mental health beds. In most states, there is currently no standardized system for locating a treatment bed in a crisis situation, leading to overcrowded emergency rooms and additional barriers to care for patients. The bill has not yet been scored, but there is a sense that it would lead to savings in the long run.

A MHLG member asked about sharing best practices or providing technical assistance to states. Another member asked about combining states.

Jeff also gave an update about the Energy and Commerce Committee mental health proposal, of which his boss is an original cosponsor, H.R. 4435, the Comprehensive Behavioral Health Reform and Recovery Act of 2016.

The bill increases investments in services and resources across the entire spectrum of mental health care, reflecting policy priorities put forth by Democratic members during ongoing Health Subcommittee efforts this Congress.

2. Mental Health Month Activities; Jonah Cunningham, Legislative Assistant, Office of Congresswoman Grace F. Napolitano (D-CA-32)

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Rep. Napolitano's office wants to coordinate activities throughout the month with organizations and are working on developing events. They will be doing Twitter Town Halls and Briefings.

Rep. Napolitano's office will also continue Mental Health Mondays – where they highlight a component of mental health care such as law enforcement, children, work force, veterans, and disparities. On February 8, they discussed community based mental health. On February 22 they will discuss treatments for mental health.

3. Chronic Care: Independence at Home Medicare Demonstration; Dr. Eric DeJonge, Washington Hospital Center and President-Elect of the American Academy of Home Care Medicine

The Independence at Home Medicare Demonstration started in 2012. It provides home based primary care, wherein a mobile team delivers medical, mental health and social services in the home and across all settings, until the last day of life. The target population is the five percent subgroup of elders with severe chronic illness/disability.

There are 14 programs across the country with 90,000 patients receiving house calls.

There is a need for national legislation that focuses on high risk/high cost patients and defines clinical services. The goal is to serve one million patients over 10 years.

Over 60% of patients have dementia or a primary psychiatric illness.

There is bipartisan support for Independence at Home extension, including Sens. Markey (D-MA), Wyden (D-OR), Burr (R-NC), and Isakson (R-GA) and Reps. Roskam (R-IL-6), Burgess (R-TX-26), and Thompson (D-CA-5).

4. Coalition Updates:

February 18 is the Annual MHLG meeting. We will vote for co-chairs of the Health Policy Committee at the meeting.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell announced proposed revisions to the Confidentiality of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Patient Records regulations, 42 CFR Part 2. The goal of the proposed changes, which will be published in the Federal Register on February 9, 2016, is to facilitate information exchange within new health care models while addressing the legitimate privacy concerns of patients seeking treatment for a substance use disorder.

The Every Student Succeeds Act passed last year. There is no longer the Elementary and Secondary Counseling Program (which was \$50 million). There is now the Successful, Safe and Stable Students Program (\$8.1 billion).

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 of letters from mid-December - January is below.

- [NASW signs on to letter to Acting U.S. Secretary of Education regarding Implementing Programs Under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act \(01/21/16\)](#)