



November 1, 2016

**Medicare Reimbursement:**

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

Since launching our action alert in October, 2015, 1,873 advocates sent 6,235 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.

NASW members are still working 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. In August, Dr. Angelo McClain sent a letter to each Chapter Executive Director providing information about *S.2173/H.R. 3712*, their Chapter's Congressional delegation, Congressional offices to target in their delegations, as well as a sample letter to use in outreach efforts. **We ask that Chapters continue to reach out to their Congressional delegation in November to secure additional co-sponsors.**

NASW has contracted with actuarial firm, The Moran Company, to conduct an analysis and determine a cost estimate of the legislation. Doing an external analysis may help when we seek co-sponsors for the legislation.

Co-sponsors of the legislation 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

### **Electoral Work:**

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

In October, NASW-PACE endorsed 11 incumbents/candidates for Congress. This adds to the 133 endorsed incumbents/candidates for Congress in July and 25 incumbents/candidates in September. To view a list of endorsed candidates, visit the [PACE page](#) on the NASW website. The October endorsed candidates will be posted soon.

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

NASW-PACE began phone banking from the National office on September 19. Volunteers are calling NASW members to encourage them to register to vote, volunteer for endorsed candidates and remind everyone to vote on Tuesday, November 8. Volunteers were recruited from the DC-Metro area. So far volunteers have called over 700 NASW members. Volunteers first called members in Illinois because of the Senate race and then New Hampshire because of the Presidential and Senate race. In the final two weeks, volunteers will be calling members in North Carolina where there is a tight Senate race. Volunteers will continue phone banking on October 31 and November 7. If you live in the DC-Metro area and are interested in volunteering for a phone bank, please contact Dina Kastner at [dkastner.nasw@socialworkers.org](mailto:dkastner.nasw@socialworkers.org) or 202-336-8218.

### **Administration:**

#### ***Criminal Justice Mental Health Transition Document***

NASW social justice staff participated in a roundtable discussion on the implications of the Comprehensive Addictions and Recovery Act (CARA) on policy, treatment, and funding to states and municipalities. NASW is a member of the CARA workgroup.

NASW joined a working group of the Opioid Coalition with the Office of Management and Budget. NASW staff was asked to provide information and rationale for maximum funding of the recently passed Comprehensive Addictions and Recovery Act (CARA).

NASW participated in a planning phone call with the Opioid Coalition working group to develop the draft criminal justice mental health transition report. Timeline includes: full meeting of collaborating organizations on November 3, 2016; Final report completed by November 10, 2016 with formal public rollout on December 1, 2016.

### **Coalition Work:**

NASW participated in coalition work with:

- Leadership Council of Aging Organizations
- Eldercare Workforce Alliance
- Social Work and Health Care Work Group (National Coalition on Care Coordination)
- Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- Coalition on Human Needs
- Mental Health Liaison Group

### **Criminal Justice**

Safe Alternatives to Segregation Advisory Committee Annual Meeting

NASW Social Justice staff participated in the two-day meeting of the Safe Alternatives to Segregation (Solitary Confinement). NASW is on the advisory committee of this group. The key policy impact was the

opportunity to present and discuss the role of social work to provide both policy and practice expertise in developing safe use of restrictive housing.

### **Mental Health Liaison Group Meeting**

#### **1. Rural Health Legislation – Beth Wikler, PhD, Health Policy Advisor, Office of Senator Al Franken (D-MN)**

Senator Franken is working on three pieces of legislation about rural health: *Strengthening Our Rural Health Workforce Act of 2016 (S. 3190)*, *Connecting Rural Americans to Care Act of 2016 (S. 3189)*, *Rural Health Care Quality Improvement Act of 2016 (S. 3191)*. Senator Franken held a Rural Health Tour in 2014-2015 to hear from constituents about challenges they face and what communities are doing right. As a result of the Tour, he developed these pieces of legislation focusing on workforce, access to care, and quality improvement.

Sen. Franken introduced the *Strengthening Our Rural Health Workforce Act of 2016 (S. 3190)* on July 13, 2016. The legislation seeks to conduct a comprehensive strategic planning for workforce needs, improve training programs for rural physicians and other primary care training programs, increase support for emerging professions and expand our mental health workforce.

In terms of access to mental health services, the number one barrier is transportation, which is addressed in the *Connecting Rural Americans to Care Act of 2016 (S. 3189)*. The final piece of legislation Senator Franken introduced on this topic is the *Rural Health Care Quality Improvement Act of 2016 (S. 3191)* which focuses on quality care for our nation's rural population.

#### **2. Overview of Philadelphia's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) Population Health Approach – Kim Torguson, Communications Director and Arthur C. Evans, Jr, Phd, Commissioner, DBHIDS, Philadelphia, PA**

DBHIDS is the administrator for public mental health and addiction services. It is the safety net for 1.5 million people. There are over 200 providers, with a full continuum of services.

The agency is doing a population health approach. The goal is to intervene at the earliest possible time. It uses a social ecological view, understanding people in their context. Many factors influence health status so intervention is necessary outside of health.

Part of the approach is to support people and promote healthy communities. The goal is to move beyond psychotherapy and medication. Therapy is important and they do not abandon it. In addition, DBHIDS does mental health screenings at libraries, grocery stores and other non-health related organizations. They recognize the need for mental health first aid, the need for increased understanding in the hopes of reducing the stigma. They help reduce the stigma through their public arts program, Porch Light, which educates the community about mental health, with 30 murals across the city.

To learn more please visit their [consumer-friendly website](#) for increase education about mental health. DBHIDS also has a program devoted to engaging men of color.

### **3. Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force – Cecilia Munoz, Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council**

Ms. Munoz chairs the task force of federal agencies for the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force. President Obama signed a [Presidential Memorandum](#) in March 2016 creating this task force, which focuses on ensuring that Americans receive the coverage and treatment that they need.

The goal is to increase consumer awareness of parity and transparency in the system. The task force is working on a comprehensive report and hope they can continue to increase knowledge of insurers about their responsibilities.

### **4. Organization Introductions:**

The Jewish Federations of North America introduced their organization.

### **5. Coalition Updates**

- Michael Linsky is stepping aside as Secretary after serving for 3 years; Phyllis Foxworth volunteered to assume the Secretary responsibilities.
- The Destination Dignity March was held on October 10 with over 500 participants.
- The Bazelon Center has a voting guide for people with disabilities.
- The Capitol Club House is hosting a fundraiser on November 10 in Washington, DC.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics has a Blueprint for Kids, which sets the groundwork for the next administration.

### **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 September are listed below.

- [NASW signs onto Mental Health Liaison Group letter supporting the Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act \(9/28/2016\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to open letter urging Congress to avoid increases to Medicare Part B deductibles and premiums in calendar year 2017 \(9/27/16\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to letter encouraging Senators to include funding for Flint in the Continuing Resolution \(9/26/2016\)](#)
- [NASW signs on to Leadership Council of Aging Organizations letters urging the Senate and the House appropriations committees to increase funding for the Older Americans Act and other aging-related programs in fiscal year 2017 \(9/21/16\)](#)
- [NASW Signs on to Press Release urging Senate consideration of Mental Health Reform \(9/12/2016\)](#)

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