



May 2019

## Legislative



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

NASW continues to promote this bill as a priority focus in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress. The legislation will

provide a crucial step forward in access to mental health care for Medicare beneficiaries and in advancing pay equity for social workers. NASW is circulating a sign on letter to encourage lawmakers to cosponsor this bill; national organizations are welcome to sign on to this communication. If you have not already done so, please [email your lawmaker](#) now to urge them to cosponsor this legislation.



**The Workplace Violence Prevention for Healthcare and Social Service Workers Act (S. 851/H.R. 1309):** NASW is working closely with a broad range of health, human services and labor organizations to advance the bill. As of today there are over 150 cosponsors. Please [email your lawmaker](#) now to urge them to cosponsor this legislation.



CONNECT, CREATE, CONTRIBUTE MAY 2019

**Older Americans Act (OAA):** The OAA will expire on September 30 and legislation to reauthorize it is now pending in Congress. As a member of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO), NASW helped to develop a robust set of OAA reauthorization recommendations, which the coalition sent to Capitol Hill in late April. Read the [LCAO Consensus Recommendations for the 2019 Older Americans Act Reauthorization](#) and use them in your own advocacy. You can [email your lawmaker](#) to encourage Congress to Fund and Protect the Older Americans Act and Other Aging Services Programs.

**The Equality Act (H.R. 5):** The U.S. House of Representatives passed this bill on May 17. This much-needed legislation will remedy many of the social injustices faced by the LGBTQ community. Among other things, the bill would ban sexual orientation and gender identity bias on the job and by public accommodation providers such as hotels, restaurants, and health-care facilities. Thank you to those who responded to the action alert on this bill to push towards passage.

**End Surprise Billing:** NASW signed on to a Families USA [letter](#) regarding out-of-network balance bills (surprise billing). Surprise billing, also known as out-of-network balance billing, occurs when an insured patient is inadvertently treated by an out-of-network provider due to no fault of their own, and then is charged the difference between the rate their insurer pays the provider and the provider's billed charge. This amount is often many times what the consumer's in-network cost-sharing responsibility would be. The letter urges Congress to address surprise billing and enhance consumer protections.

## Regulatory

NASW signs on to [comments](#) with the Campaign for Tobacco Free-Kids Coalition in response to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) proposed Modifications to Compliance Policy for Certain Deemed Tobacco Products (Docket No. FDA-2019-D-0661). The comments respond to the FDA's proposed steps to prevent youth from accessing flavored tobacco products and the Coalition recommends that more be done to effectively end youth access to tobacco and reverse the e-cigarette epidemic.



## Collaboration

**Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health:** NASW co-sponsored the [2019 Annual Meeting](#) of the Consortium on April 28 and 29. The Consortium focuses on activities that bring awareness to the health effects of climate change on a national, state and local level. The

Consortium also promotes and advocates for public policy solutions. Find out more at their [web site](#).

**CMS Comprehensive Primary Care Plus National Meeting:** NASW staff attended this meeting convened by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on May 8 and 9. The meeting focused on innovations in primary care service delivery, including integrated behavioral health models.

**Older Americans Month (OAM):** Although OAM 2019 is under way, it's not too late to plan advocacy activities in your community, using materials (available in both English and Spanish) from the [Administration for Community Living's OAM microsite](#).

**Care Coordination Issue Brief:**

NASW contributed to the development of a [care coordination issue brief](#) recently released by the Eldercare Workforce Alliance (of which NASW is a member), the National Coalition on Care Coordination, and the Center for Health and Social Care Integration. Use this issue brief in your advocacy on behalf of older adults.

**Nursing Home Social Services:**

The NASW Ohio Chapter partnered with the Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University (Ohio) on a project examining nursing home social services. With support from the Retirement Research Foundation, Scripps published a research brief titled [Impact of Social Service Staffing on Nursing Home Quality and Resident Outcomes](#). According to the brief, which is national in scope and based on multiple studies using federal data, increasing the amount of social services staff in nursing facilities and skilled nursing facilities is a cost-effective way to improve facility quality. The brief also notes that higher qualifications of social service staff improve resident outcomes, although it does not distinguish professional social work services (those provided by a BSW or MSW) and social services provided by staff with baccalaureate degrees in disciplines other than social work. Use the brief to make the case for nursing home staffing in your state or jurisdiction.



**World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD):** This year marks the 15th anniversary of WEAAD, observed on June 15. Use the [Elder Justice Roadmap](#), WEAAD materials from the [National](#)

[Center on Elder Abuse](#) (NCEA), and the FrameWorks Institute–NCEA video lecture series, *Reframing the Conversation on Elder Abuse* (series free through June 14, 2019, with coupon code WEAAD2018), to inform your advocacy. Spread the word about your WEAAD event by posting it to the [NCEA WEAAD event page](#). Register to participate in the fifth annual [WEAAD Global Summit](#), for which NASW serves as a national partner, on June 11. (Although a live stream of the summit will not be available, an on-demand video will be posted to the summit page following the event.)

**Congressional Briefing on Youth Decarceration:** In recent years, increasing numbers of transition age youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD) and mental illness have become incarcerated in our county and city jails. Although no federal data are available on this issue, the best field estimates are that these youth now represent between 5-10% of the jail population. Some of these youth have complex health problems, including mental illness. Most have fallen off the radar of local health and human services programs. Almost all have failed to make the transition from youth to adult services. The May 15 briefing covered decarceration and diversion strategies prevention of incarceration through better outreach and care coordination, and better use of home and community-based services.

Sponsors of the briefing included the National Association of County Behavioral Health and Developmental Disability Directors, the National Association for Rural Mental Health, the National Association of Counties, the National Sheriffs Association, the National Association of Social Workers, Benchmark Human Services, and Optum.

**Get Involved!** We encourage you to join [NASW's Advocacy Listserv](#) to stay up-to-date on Congressional activity. 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](mailto:dkastner.nasw@socialworkers.org).*

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW), in Washington, D.C., is the largest membership organization of professional social workers. 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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