



Section for Psychiatric & Substance Abuse Services

To: Members, AHA's Section for Psychiatric & Substance Abuse Services
From: Rebecca Chickey, Director, Section for Psychiatric & Substance Abuse Services
Subject: Update on Key Issues in the Behavioral Health Care Field: [July 2016](#)

AHA Advocacy Update

Mental Health Bill: The House Energy and Commerce Committee voted 53-0 to approve the *Helping Families in Mental Health Crisis Act (H.R. 2646)* after several modifications were made to the bill as a result of bipartisan negotiations. In a [letter](#) to committee leaders, AHA said the amended bill "represents a solid foundation for improving behavioral health care." AHA voiced support for provisions that would reauthorize suicide prevention programs and authorize a minority fellowship program for mental health professionals; codify a Medicaid managed care regulation allowing optional state coverage of Institutions for Mental Disease services for adults; and require the Department of Health and Human Services to clarify the circumstances in which covered entities may disclose protected health information of a patient with mental illness. The House plans to vote on the bill later this month.

Improving Access to Generic Drugs: The AHA has expressed support for the *Creating and Restoring Equal Access to Equivalent Samples Act*, which targets anticompetitive behaviors used to block and delay entry of generic drugs. The bipartisan legislation would allow a generic drug manufacturer facing one of these delay tactics to bring an action in federal court for injunctive relief and allow a judge to award damages to deter future delaying conduct. "The AHA supports policies to advance sustainable and fair drug prices while encouraging innovation of new therapies," AHA Executive Vice President Tom Nickels said in a [letter](#) of support to Senate Judiciary Committee leaders sponsoring the bill.

AHA Regulatory Update

Teaming Up to End Opioid Epidemic: Across America, hospitals are working hard to combat the epidemic. Knowledge and improved patient/physician communication are essential tools in this fight, and in effective pain management. The AHA has joined with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to [release](#) a new [resource](#) to help hospitals foster more effective and fact-based conversations between patients and physicians about opioids, the risks and the alternatives. The one-page resource, developed with input from subject matter and hospital clinical and behavioral health experts, is an important addition to the AHA opioid abuse [resources](#) already available.

Treating Patients with Buprenorphine: AHA [supports](#) the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [proposed rule](#) on "Medication Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorders." The proposed rule would revise the highest patient limit for treatment with buprenorphine from 100 patients to 200 patients for practitioners that meet certain conditions.

New Rules for PHP: On June 15, representatives from AHA, the National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems, and the Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare (AABH) met in Washington with senior officials from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to follow-up on concerns raised in a joint [NAPHS/AABH letter](#) about the recently released article titled [Enforcement of the Partial Hospitalization Program \(PHP\) 20 Hours per Week Billing Requirement](#). In the meeting, they shared the field's concerns that this guidance goes far beyond the current policy and makes substantive changes to the billing process for partial hospitalization. The associations urged CMS not to move ahead with the code edit change until there is a thorough review with input from the stakeholder community.

New Mental Health Parity Resources & Task Force: SAMHSA and the Department of Labor (DOL) have a new resource to inform individuals about their rights under the Mental Health Parity and Addictions Equity Act (MHPAEA). “[Know Your Rights: Parity for Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Benefits](#)” educates consumers about how to find information about their health plan benefits and coverage, as well as their right to appeal a claim if denied. Additionally, the Legal Action Center has released [Health Insurance for Addiction and Mental Health Care: A Guide to the Federal Parity Law](#). It explains patients’ and providers’ rights to insurance coverage for behavioral health. In other news, President Obama has created a Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder [Parity Task Force](#), which now wants to hear from patients, families, consumer advocates, health care providers, insurers and other stakeholders on their experiences with coverage and receiving mental health and substance abuse services. [Share comments online](#) with the Parity Task Force, or email parity@hhs.gov.

AHA Resources

New Community Health Needs Assessment Resource: AHA’s Health Research & Educational Trust and the Association for Community Health Improvement just released [Engaging Patients and Communities in the Community Health Needs Assessment Process](#). The guide presents a model for engaging patients, their families and community members at each step of the CHNA process and highlights the importance of involving behavioral health experts and assessing behavioral health needs in the process.

Guidance to Strengthen Behavioral Health Workforce: A new [report](#) by the AHA offers information and guidance to help hospitals and health systems develop their behavioral health care workforce to meet future needs. The report looks at how hospitals and health systems are bridging the gap between the need for behavioral health care in their communities and a shortage of trained specialists. It offers examples of how to integrate behavioral and physical health, and identifies seven steps to guide and spur dialog among internal and external stakeholders on the issue.

AHA Members Only Webinars

- **July 14 – A Critical Access Hospital Leading Behavioral Health Outreach in a Rural Community: Sanpete Valley Hospital.** Aaron Wood, Administrator, and Brooke Heath, Communications Specialist, Sanpete Valley Hospital, Mount Pleasant, Utah, will describe their *Behavioral Community Health Network*, which has reduced stigma as well as the number of patients using the ED for behavioral health services. To register, [click here](#).
- **July 22 – A Three-County Collaborative: Reducing the Use & Addiction of Opioids.** Melissa Weimer, D.O., Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of General Internal Medicine and Geriatrics, Oregon Health State University Hospital, Portland, Ore., and senior executives from the hospital will describe how this collaborative involving 14 hospitals from four health systems, two CCOs and four health departments developed a community standard to reduce the use of and addiction to opiates. To register, [click here](#).

The [July Behavioral Health Update](#) includes information on a [proposed rule](#) to modify Medicare’s Conditions of Participation; [AHA](#) comment letter on future IPF quality measures; a brief on [Disparities within Serious Mental Illness](#); CMS [postponement](#) of three IPF quality measures; and more.

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