



Behavioral Health Update

May 2020 Behavioral Health Update

May is Mental Health Awareness

Chair File: New resources for strong mental well-being

Kicking off Mental Health Awareness Month, this [column](#) from AHA Board Chair Melinda Estes, M.D., reviews important new resources available to help care providers, medical professionals and the general public maintain peak mental health and well-being.

Advocacy and Regulatory Updates

CMS gives additional Medicare coverage flexibility for behavioral health

On April 20, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services [announced](#) new flexibility in Medicare coverage for several behavioral healthcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic, including partial hospitalization. CMS said it will allow payment for certain PHP services delivered in temporary expansion locations, including patients' homes. The [rule](#) also states hospitals may bill for services provided remotely by hospital-based practitioners to Medicare patients registered as hospital outpatients, including when the patient is at home when the home is serving as a temporary provider-based department of the hospital. CMS is also increasing payments for telephone visits to match payments for similar office and outpatient visits.

HHS urged to release 42 CFR Part 2 rule

Members of the Partnership to Amend 42 CFR Part 2, including the AHA, [recently urged](#) the Department of Health and Human Services to issue a rule as soon as possible on the Part 2 provisions in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Safety Act. Section 3221 of the CARES Act directs the agency to revise any pertinent regulations to implement the provisions, which permit the disclosure of substance use disorder records, with the patient's initial consent, for the purposes of treatment, payment and health care operations.

SAMHSA awards grants for certified community behavioral health clinics

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has awarded \$450 million

in [grants](#), to expand access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment services through certified community behavioral health clinics. Congress last year extended the AHA-supported CCBHC demonstration program through Sept. 13.

AHA-supported bill would extend COVID-19 telehealth expansion to additional providers, including therapists and social workers

Reps. Cynthia Axne, D-IA, Troy Balderson, R-OH, and French Hill, R-AR, have introduced the Emergency COVID Telehealth Response Act, legislation that would extend HHS' waiver authority for telehealth services to include therapists, social workers and certain other providers during the COVID-19 emergency. The agency last month used its [waiver authority](#) to broaden access to telehealth services for Medicare beneficiaries during the emergency.

Upcoming Events and Webinars, and new Resources

May 22 webinar: Frameworks and an innovative initiative to advance well-being during and after a pandemic

Join us for a webinar May 22 at 2 p.m. ET to learn how the trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting our health care workforce and what supports are available as we navigate what the future holds. Click [here](#) to register.

May 26 webinar: Mental health first aid in health care

Join us for a webinar May 26 at 2 p.m. ET to learn how the trauma of the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting our health care workforce and what supports are available as we navigate what the future holds. Click [here](#) to register.

National Council for Behavioral Health webinars open to AHA members

Click [here](#) for the webinar, Self-care and Promoting Post-traumatic Growth and Management During COVID-19, on May 27 from 2-3:30 p.m. ET.

Webinars: Providing the continuum of inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services during COVID-19

In two webinars, senior leaders from Maryland's Sheppard Pratt Health System, including President and CEO and AHA Trustee Harsh Trivedi, M.D., discussed how they re-engineered care processes, developed new care protocols and more for their inpatient and outpatient psychiatric settings. Click [here](#) to access the inpatient-focused recording, and [here](#) to access the outpatient-focused recording.

Podcasts:

In this three-part AHA [Advancing Health podcast series](#), executive leaders from Tideland Health based in Georgetown, S.C., talk about how hospitals without behavioral health services can still improve access to psychiatric and substance use treatment, and meet community needs. Read the [blog](#) from Bruce Bailey, president and CEO of Tideland Health to learn more.

Blog: Taking care of mental health in the time of COVID-19

In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, and the elevated importance of mental well-being during the pandemic, members offer guidance and insights on a number of topics through the following blogs:

- [*Coping and Stress resources for health care workers during and after the COVID-19 pandemic*](#)
- [*Using social media to help with behavioral health care during pandemic*](#)
- [*St. Joseph Hospital on maternal mental health during pandemic*](#)
- [*Meeting behavioral health needs of seniors during COVID-19*](#)

Meeting behavioral health needs of health care workers and their family

The AHA's [Behavioral Health Services](#), its AHA's [Physician Alliance](#) as well as AHA's American Organization for Nursing Leadership recently unveiled a [resource](#) to help medical professionals, behavioral health providers and the general public maintain their mental and emotional well-being during and post the COVID-19 pandemic. Check out another AHA [resource](#) that provides resources focused on three areas – mental health, food and housing.

Federal agencies, private sector groups unite on a mental health and suicide prevention national response to COVID-19

Recognizing the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country's mental health and well-being, the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, which serves as the nation's public and private partnership for suicide prevention, is launching the Mental Health & Suicide Prevention National Response to COVID-19. The Action Alliance, of which AHA is a partner, will convene government agencies, corporations and other non-governmental groups to comprehensively and collectively address mental health and suicide prevention.

Updates

COVID-19: More people could die from alcohol, drug misuse and suicide

The COVID-19 pandemic could increase "deaths of despair" from alcohol, drug misuse and suicide by between 27,644 and 154,037 over the decade, depending how quickly the economy recovers, according to a [study](#) released by Well Being Trust and the Robert Graham Center for Policy Studies in Family Medicine and Primary Care. The authors emphasize that the report "is not a call to suddenly reopen the country," but to maintain infection control while addressing the nation's mental health and addiction needs.

PPE for substance use treatment providers

A SAMHSA [letter](#) validates that services provided in behavioral health treatment programs are essential medical services that may require personal protective equipment and ordering them is for a legitimate need and purpose.

SAMHSA updates COVID-19 resource on mental and substance use disorders

SAMHSA updated their document, [Considerations for the Care and Treatment of Mental and Substance Use Disorders in the COVID-19 Epidemic](#), which includes considerations aimed

at decreasing the likelihood of infection and viral transmission and providing for the behavioral health needs of patients.

Health care workers invited to participate in study on COVID-19 stressors

Researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health are conducting an online [study](#) to learn how stressors related to COVID-19 affect the mental health of health care workers over time. The voluntary study involves completing an online questionnaire every one to three months for 12 months.

New report from the National Academy of Medicine looks at OUD

Twenty-five strategies to overcome existing barriers in the treatment system are outlined in a new [NAM Perspectives Discussion Paper](#) are more critical than ever during the pandemic.

Joint AHA/NABH May behavioral health communication

This month's edition includes: Substance use disorder treatment is [deemed](#) an essential medical service by the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy; HHS' Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality releases a consent [form](#) for telehealth services; SAMHSA [application](#) for its Treatment, Recovery, and Workforce Support grants; and more. To access past *Behavioral Health Updates*, [click here](#).

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[Upcoming Events](#)

