



American Hospital Association

To: Members, AHA's Section for Psychiatric & Substance Abuse Services
From: Rebecca B. Chickey, Director, AHA's SPASAS
Subject: Update on Key Issues in the Behavioral Health Care Field: October, 2011

Section Governing Council Meeting

The 16 member Governing Council of AHA's Section for Psychiatric Services met in Washington, DC on October 3-4, 2011. They received a legislative and regulatory update on issues of key importance to behavioral health providers, as well as information on: value-based purchasing, the new bundling initiative, and the development of state insurance exchanges. Council members discussed, and gave feedback on several other agenda items including *Training Physicians to Deliver High-Value Care*, the AHA Committee on Performance Improvement (CPI) report on [*Hospitals and Care Systems of the Future*](#) and joined several of their colleagues for the AHA Advocacy day.

Deficit Reduction: Medicare & Medicaid

President Obama has proposed \$320 billion in reductions to Medicare and Medicaid as part of a \$3 trillion deficit reduction plan he submitted to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction. As reported in the September Behavioral Health Update, the committee is charged with crafting by November 23 a far-reaching plan to reduce the national deficit by at least \$1.2 trillion. *The president's plan calls for cutting Medicare by \$248 billion and Medicaid by \$73 billion over 10 years.*

The AHA recently sent to hospital leaders a [*Legislative Action Alert*](#) with several fact sheets detailing the impact cuts to hospital funding could have on access to services, and to hospital jobs and other jobs supported by hospitals when they buy goods and services from other businesses in their communities. Share these fact sheets with your legislators. If they are not members of the supercommittee, ask them to speak with their colleagues on the committee and urge them to reject any proposals to cut Medicare and Medicaid funding for hospitals. Please note, there will be a November 3rd Advocacy Day so keep your eye out for the invite.

Reducing Readmissions

A new AHA TrendWatch [report](#) examines recent research on hospital readmissions, including the linkages between readmissions and quality of care, and the various circumstances that may drive readmissions. According to the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, nearly one-fifth of Medicare beneficiaries discharged from a hospital return within 30 days. While reducing avoidable hospital readmissions will improve health care quality and lower spending, not all readmissions can or should be avoided, the report notes. Additional Section specific resources can be found at <http://www.aha.org/advocacy-issues/mentalhealth/confcalls.shtml>. Here you can find the recordings of several AHA member only calls on reducing readmissions.

Parity Implementation Coalition

[The Parity Implementation Coalition](#) recently submitted suggestions on ways to clarify federal parity requirements on public disclosure and non-quantitative treatment limitations. The coalition additionally recommended publishing a series of frequently asked questions to further clarify the need for a broad range of levels of care for behavioral disorders if medical/surgical benefits offers a range. Report plan violations to the Parity Implementation Coalition. [Click here](#), or go to <http://www.mentalhealthparitywatch.org/Action%20Center/Pages/default.aspx> to learn more about reporting concerns.

Joint Commission

The Joint Commission's (TJC's) Annual Behavioral Health Care Conference and 2012 Accreditation Standards Update is formatted into a two-day event, November 16-17, in Lombard, Illinois. Information from the agenda to registration forms is available at www.jcrinc.com/Conferences-and-Seminars/Annual-Conference-on-Behavioral-Health-Care/2264/. Additionally, TJC has released its 2011 edition of *Improving America's Hospitals*, an annual summary report on core measure performance data for all TJC-accredited hospitals. For the second year, the report includes the Hospital Based Inpatient Psychiatric Services (HBIPS) core measures which continue to improve.

IOM issues guidelines for ACA essential benefits package

A new Institute of Medicine [report](#) recommends criteria and methods to guide the Department of Health and Human Services in developing a package of essential benefits that includes coverage for mental health and substance use disorder services, for qualified health plans under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. The ACA requires HHS to define the minimum package of benefits that certain health plans must cover, including those participating in health insurance exchanges. Among other items, the report recommends that the cost of the average premium for the initial package not exceed the national average premium for the typical small employer plan.

HIT, Medical Homes, and Integration Grants

The Department of Health and Human Services' Health Resources and Services Administration recently awarded \$32 million in Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act [grants](#) to help 904 community health centers achieve recognition as patient-centered medical homes. In addition, HHS' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [awarded](#) \$15 million from the ACA's Prevention and Public Health Fund to improve coordination of health care services at publicly funded community-based behavioral health settings, including mental health centers and public health departments.

SAMHSA also [awarded](#) 47 community health centers that serve people with mental and substance use disorders \$200,000 each to develop health information technology infrastructure and expand the use of electronic health records and the National Council on Community Behavioral Health Care received \$3.8 million to help community health centers and state-designated agencies implement electronic health records. For more on the agency's health IT efforts, visit www.samhsa.gov/healthIT/.

September Behavioral Health Update

Attached is this month's [Behavioral Health Update](#), a joint communication from the AHA and the National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems. The October issue includes information on the Centers for Disease Control plan to integrate mental illness and chronic disease prevention, a Kaiser report on Medicaid managed care and much more.

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