

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: [December 2016](#)

AHA Letter to President-elect Trump

The AHA recently [shared](#) with President-elect Trump its public policy priorities for the new administration. Specific to behavioral health patients and providers AHA asked the Administration to improve funding for and access to behavioral health services; promote policies to improve the integration of physical and behavioral health services; fully implement the mental health parity law, and work to reduce workforce shortages. AHA also urged the President-elect to address existing barriers to care, such as Medicare's 190-day lifetime limit in inpatient psychiatric treatment, and Medicaid's Institute for Mental Disease exclusion. Go to AHA's new webpage, [2017 Transition](#) for additional information on what the Trump Administration and the 115th Congress will mean for hospitals' mission of caring for patients and their community.

AHA Advocacy Update

House passes 21st Century Cures Act: On November 30th the House of Representatives voted 392-26 to approve the [AHA-supported](#) 21st Century Cures Act ([H.R. 34](#)), which includes a number of provisions important to hospitals and health systems. The Senate could vote on the measure within days. The bill among other items, would revise the 2015 Bipartisan Budget Act to move the grandfather date for off-campus hospital outpatient departments under development from Nov. 2, 2015 to Dec. 31, 2016 or 60 days after enactment, whichever is later; adjust the Hospital Readmissions Reduction Program to account for socioeconomic status; provide funding to help states address the opioid abuse crisis; and make improvements related to mental health and substance abuse disorder services. For more information, see the recent [AHA Special Bulletin](#) for members.

Chronic care draft legislation: AHA commended the Senate Finance Committee Chronic Care Working Group on the release of its recent draft legislation to address the needs of Medicare beneficiaries and recommended further refinements. Specifically, AHA [applauded](#) the workgroup for proposing some expansions to the Medicare telehealth benefit. AHA also urged the workgroup to address behavioral health needs in its next draft.

AHA Regulatory Update

OPPS/ASC final rule adopts revised site-neutral policy: As reported last month, CMS has issued a [final rule](#) updating hospital outpatient prospective payment system rates by 1.65% in 2017 compared to 2016. The rule also makes changes to the psychiatric partial hospitalization program. AHA's [Regulatory Advisory](#) provides detail on the impact of this final rule.

AHA Resources

Toolkit on NAIC model network adequacy legislation: The AHA has released a [members-only toolkit](#) for hospital and health system leaders on the National Association of Insurance Commissioners' model state-level legislation to ensure health insurance provider network adequacy – a growing concern for behavioral health providers and patients. The toolkit is designed to help hospitals and state hospital associations with their advocacy efforts at the state level on this issue. Last year, NAIC updated the model legislation to increase state regulator oversight of provider networks, increase health plan transparency and provide a framework for addressing unexpected bills that some consumers face when getting care from out-of-network physicians at in-network hospitals.

The [Association for Community Health Improvement 2017 National Conference](#) is scheduled for March 9-11, in Denver, CO. [Register](#) by December 31 for early bird discounted rates. The conference connects more than 600 peers in community health, population health and community benefit each year for education and networking. Visit www.healthycommunities.org to learn more.

[Payment pathways for clinicians under MACRA](#): The AHA released an [infographic](#) depicting the two new payment pathways for clinicians under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act, which repealed the sustainable growth rate formula and provides performance based payment increases beginning in 2017. The graphic shows who is eligible for the Merit-based Incentive Payment System and alternative payment models pathways, the payment impact and evaluation criteria. MIPS is the default pathway for clinicians who lack significant participation in advanced alternative payment models or low Medicare volume. For more MACRA resources, go to: www.aha.org/MACRA.

AHA Members Only Webinars & Conference Calls

- **December 7, 3:30 ET -- *Expanding Mental Health Services in the Face of a Workforce Shortage.*** Caroline Fisher, M.D., vice president and department chair, and Heidi May-Stoullil, operations director, mental health, Samaritan Health Services, Corvallis, Ore., will explore the state of the mental health workforce and practice, examine outpatient models of mental health care extension and share how Samaritan Health System is trying to expand access by changing the way mental illness is address in both primary and specialty care. To register, [click here](#).
- **December 13, 3:00 ET -- *Morrison County's Success in Combating Prescription Drug Abuse.*** Lee Boyles, President, and Kathy Lange, Foundation Director, CHI St. Gabriel's Health, Little Falls, MN will describe the work and impact of a community *Prescription Drug Task Force*. In only four months, prescription drug usage has decreased and \$439,000 taxpayer dollars were saved. To register, [click here](#).
- **January 18, 1:30 ET -- *The Value of Patient/Peer Advisory Groups: Improving Behavioral Health Services.*** Stuart Buttlare, Ph.D., Regional Director of Inpatient Psychiatry and Continuing Care, Northern Kaiser Permanente, Oakland, CA will share the evolution of Kaiser's Peer Advisory Council. The Council's input has driven the modification of several elements in the Kaiser behavioral health service line improving the quality of care and patient satisfaction. To register, [click here](#).

The [December Behavioral Health Update](#) includes information on: U.S. Surgeon General's landmark report, [Facing Addiction in America: A Surgeon General's Prevention Report on Alcohol, Drugs, and Health](#); Nurse practitioners and physician assistants [training](#) to prescribe buprenorphine, a medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorders, the National Alliance on Mental Illness report, [Out-of-Network, Out-of-Pocket, Out-of-Options: The Unfulfilled Promise of Mental Health Parity](#), and more. As always, [click here](#) for more resources for AHA member behavioral health providers.

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