



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: [March 2016](#)

Legislative Update

Senate HELP Committee Approves Mental Health Reform Act: Among other provisions, the bill would establish a chief medical officer at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to promote the use of evidence-based practices and require the agency to report on progress toward strategic priorities. It also would require the Health and Human Services secretary to issue guidance to health plans on mental health parity protections, and training and resources for care providers and patients on sharing protected health information. The committee also approved four bills aimed at preventing opioid abuse and overdoses. The legislation could be considered on the Senate floor next month, along with additional amendments. Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) said she plans to work with the Senate Finance Committee and sponsors of the bill to offer an amendment to address the Medicaid exclusion for "institutions for mental disease," which excludes coverage for inpatient psychiatric services furnished to adult beneficiaries under age 65. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) also plans to pursue amendments to increase access to child psychiatrists through the National Health Service Corps.

Senate Approves Bipartisan Bill on Opioid Epidemic: Early this month, the Senate voted 94-1 to approve the [Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act \(S. 524\)](#), bipartisan legislation to address the nation's opioid epidemic. The bill would establish an interagency task force to develop best practices for pain management and medication prescribing, and authorize grants to states, local governments, nonprofit organizations and others to prevent and treat abuse of opioids, heroin and other substances.

\$94 Million Awarded to Treat Opioid Use Disorders: The day after Democrats failed to add \$600 million in emergency funding to S. 524, a bipartisan measure to address opioid abuse, the Health Resources and Services Administration awarded \$94 million in grants to [271 health centers](#) to screen and treat an estimated 124,000 new patients for substance abuse, with a focus on opioid use disorders in underserved populations. Among other uses, the awards will allow the centers to hire more providers, increase access to medication-assisted treatment and train health professionals to make informed prescribing decisions, [said](#) HHS.

Upcoming AHA Educational Opportunities

March 22 Webinar – "Clinical Pharmacist Chronic Pain Services: Implementing Interprofessional Care": Join AHA's Physician Leadership Forum and the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists to learn about improving care and outcomes for complex patients with chronic pain. Presenters will describe a clinical pharmacy service that supports the management of chronic pain patients and the benefits these services provide, including the challenges faced by providers in managing substance abuse. For more information and to register, click [here](#).

Executive Dialogue Series on Access to Behavioral Health Services

- March 30 – "Closing the Gaps and Integrating Behavioral Health Services in the Community": This collaborative provides free assessment and mental health services to low-income, chronically ill clients; as well as community-based behavioral health initiatives for older adults at risk for cognitive health disorders. Executives from Queen of the Valley Medical Center, Napa, CA, will present. For more information and to register, click [here](#).



Executive Dialogue Series on Hospital & Health Care Systems' Role in Impacting the Opiate Crisis

- April 26 – “Prescribe Safe Initiative”: Created by law enforcement, four Monterey County hospitals, and local physicians, Prescribe Safe educates and provides resources for physicians and patients in the safe use of prescription medications and promotes safe and effective pain management. Anthony Chavis, M.D., Vice President, Enterprise Chief Medical Officer, Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula, CA, will present. For more information and to register, click [here](#).
- May 25 – “Safe Passage Initiative”: Through this community collaborative, people struggling from addiction can turn in their drugs, not be arrested, and instead be connected directly to treatment. In less than four months, they have placed more than 30 individuals into treatment. David Schreiner, FACHE, President/CEO, Katherine Shaw Bethea Hospital, Dixon, IL, and Danny Langloss, Chief of Police, City of Dixon, IL, will present. For more information and to register, click [here](#).
- June 8 – “Three-County Collaborative”: This collaborative involves 14 hospitals from four health systems, two CCOs and four health departments, which developed a community standard to reduce the use of and addiction to opiates. Melissa Weimer, D.O., Assistant Professor of Medicine, Division of General Internal Medicine and Geriatrics, and senior executives from Oregon Health State University Hospital, Portland, OR, will present. For more information and to register, click [here](#).

AHA Resources

Hospitals & Health Networks (H&HN): In the [March cover story](#), learn how hospitals are fighting on the frontlines of the opioid crisis. For more H&HN opioid coverage, click [here](#).

Hospitals in Pursuit of Excellence (HPOE): *Triple Aim Strategies to Improve Behavioral Health Care*, a new [guide](#) from the AHA’s HPOE initiative, describes strategies, action steps and examples for hospitals, health systems and community stakeholders working to develop a well-coordinated, accessible, affordable and accountable system for delivering behavioral health care.

MACRA resource: The AHA has launched an online resource to help hospital and physician leaders prepare for coming changes to the Medicare physician payment system. Section 101 of the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act of 2015 replaced the Medicare Sustainable Growth Rate methodology for updates to the physician fee schedule with a physician payment system that will implement new physician quality and value-based payment programs in 2019. To access an AHA issue brief and webinar on the coming changes, slide presentation suitable for hospital boards, and other resources, click [here](#).

Behavioral Health web page: This [page](#) provides you with information and tools to assist you in navigating the changing behavioral health care system and understanding national, state and local activities affecting behavioral health.

The [March Behavioral Health Update](#) includes the Department of Defense [proposed rule](#) to improve access to care for TRICARE beneficiaries; MedPAC’s new data book: [Beneficiaries Dually Eligible for Medicare and Medicaid](#); and new IPFQR Program [Resources and Tools](#).

Rebecca Chickey

Director, AHA Section for Psychiatric & Substance Abuse Services, rchickey@aha.org; 312-422-3303.