



## 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: [October 2017](#)

### Hurricane Update

Hurricanes Irma and Maria have battered Puerto Rico. The magnitude of the devastation cannot be overstated. **As part of our efforts to help Puerto Rico, AHA has activated The Care Fund – [www.thecarefund.net](http://www.thecarefund.net) – to provide support to hospital employees in Puerto Rico affected by the storms.** As we have shared previously, the [Texas](#) and [Florida](#) hospital associations established funds to assist hospital employees impacted by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma are still accepting donations.

### AHA Advocacy Update

After Graham-Cassidy: On September 26, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell announced that the Senate would not vote on the Graham-Cassidy-Heller-Johnson proposal, the latest attempt this year to repeal and replace significant parts of the Affordable Care Act. Senators Susan Collins, John McCain, and Rand Paul publicly announced their opposition to the proposal, putting passage out of reach, and several other Republicans had expressed reservations. But this fight is not over. Read AHA President/CEO Rick Pollack's Sept. 29 column, "[What's Next in the Health Care Debate?](#)" You also can [watch a replay](#) of the Sept. 27 Town Hall webcast in which Pollack and AHA Executive Vice President Tom Nickels discuss what to expect for the rest of 2017. This week, the Senate plans to vote on its FY2018 budget resolution, which currently does not include reconciliation instructions for health care.

Urge Your Senators to Sign 340B Dear Colleague Letter: A bipartisan group of senators is asking their Senate colleagues to [sign a letter](#) urging CMS to carefully consider stakeholder feedback before finalizing its proposal to reduce Medicare Part B payment for drugs acquired through the 340B Drug Pricing Program. Please [view our chart](#) to see if your senators have signed on to the letter. If not, please contact them today. In September, 228 House members sent a similar letter.

Contact Legislators to Support New Residency Slots: Please urge your representatives and senators to co-sponsor the Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2017 (S. 1301/H.R. 2267). The bill would increase the number of physician residency slots at teaching hospitals by adding 3,000 Medicare-funded residency slots each year for the next five years, at least half of which must be used for a shortage specialty residency program, including psychiatry. Please see the [Senate](#) and the [House](#) letter of support.

### AHA Regulatory Update

HHS Seeks Comment on Draft Strategic Plan: The Health and Human Services Department (HHS) included several behavioral health goals and objectives in the draft Strategic Plan just released. The plan covers fiscal years 2018 through 2022 and includes a strategy to conduct research that would identify the "most effective health and community-based system interventions that address modifiable risk factors for prescription opioid misuse, heroin initiation, and opioid use disorder and overdose." [Comment](#) by Oct. 27.

Reducing Hospital Regulatory Burden: The AHA has [laid out](#) actions CMS can take to reduce the regulatory burden on hospitals, health systems and the patients they serve. The suggestions include removing faulty hospital quality measures; eliminating regulatory barriers that prevent innovative strategies and alternative payment models; and expanding Medicare coverage of telehealth.

### Opioid Epidemic

President's Opioid Commission: AHA provided [feedback](#) on a presidential commission's draft recommendations to expand the federal response to the drug addiction and opioid crisis. AHA urged the commission to protect health insurance coverage, expand the behavioral health workforce, and support

full funding and implementation of recently enacted legislation to combat the epidemic. For more information on AHA's work on the opioid epidemic, as well as resources and best practices, check out AHA's dedicated webpage: [Addressing the Opioid Epidemic](#).

Centers for Disease Control Raises Awareness: Every day, more than 1,000 people are treated in emergency departments for misusing prescription opioids, and more than 40 people die from prescription opioid overdoses. CDC's Centers for Control and Prevention this week launched Rx Awareness, a campaign to educate the public about the risks associated with prescription opioids. The AHA and CDC last year released a patient education resource to use with patients who may be prescribed opioids.

TJC's New Pain Standards: TJC has developed new and revised pain assessment and management standards for the Hospital accreditation program. These standards become effective January 1, 2018.

### **AHA Resources**

October 10, 2:00-3:00 p.m. CT, Webinar: Enhancing your Workforce's Impact and Patient Access to Behavioral Health thru Integration and Technology. Please register to learn how Sanford Health uses technology to maximize the impact of its existing clinical workforce.

Resources on Building a Culture of Health: How do we create a society that gives all individuals an equal opportunity to live the healthiest life they can, whatever their ethnic, geographic, racial, socioeconomic or physical circumstances are? With support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the AHA's Health Research & Educational Trust has developed a playbook and a case study guide with tools and strategies.

AHA's Social Determinants of Health Series: The first guides in the series address food insecurity and housing, and future guides will cover education, transportation and more. In addition, HRET recently conducted a podcast with Dr. Andrea Feinberg of Geisinger Health to learn more about their Fresh Food Pharmacy, which addresses food insecurity through the pharmacy.

AHA Releases MACRA Decision Guide: The AHA has released a new tool to help hospitals and clinicians decide which track to pursue under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act – the Merit-based Incentive Payment System or alternative payment models. Access the guide here. You can also view our MACRA Tracker, webinars and video series, *MACRA Minutes*.

Don't forget to check out AHA's dedicated [webpage](#) on behavioral health. There you'll find the latest news, advocacy & health policy work, recordings and materials from past behavioral health webinars, and other resources such as member case examples like Mount Sinai Hospital, Chicago – Better Care for Patients in Psychiatric Crisis; or the latest resources and best practices in [Integrating Physical and Behavioral Health](#).



The [October Behavioral Health Update](#) includes information on: CMS to Reevaluate Ligature Risk Enforcement; SAMHSA [Resources](#) for Hurricane Survivors; **tools and resources related to October 5<sup>th</sup> National Depression Screening Day**; and more. [Click here](#) for more resources on behavioral health.

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