



APA ADVOCACY *Washington Update*

To view this email as a web page, click [here](#).

APA Advocacy Washington Update is a weekly newsletter that highlights how APA is working to advance the discipline and practice of psychology on Capitol Hill and beyond. Learn more about APA's [advocacy priorities](#) for 2020.

Urging the Administration to Allow Audio-Only Telehealth for Medicare Patients



APA worked with Reps. Grace Napolitano (D-Calif.) and John Katko (R-N.Y.), co-chairs of the Congressional Mental Health Caucus, on a [letter](#) urging the secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that audio-only telemental health services be covered under Medicare during the COVID-19 pandemic. CMS issued guidance on March 30 that allows providers to evaluate patients by audio-only communications. However, this guidance does not allow providers to use audio-only communications to provide psychotherapy services and psychotherapy with evaluation and management (E/M) services covered by Medicare or to use health behavior assessment and intervention services, which help Medicare patients cope with or manage one or more physical health conditions.

Also, to raise awareness of the disparate impact on vulnerable populations, including older adults and those located in rural areas, APA joined nearly 100 national health, mental health, aging, patient advocacy and other stakeholder groups in sending a [letter](#) to HHS Secretary Alex Azar and CMS Administrator Seema Verma, urging CMS to permit the use of audio-only devices to provide Medicare-covered telehealth throughout the duration of the COVID-19 public health emergency. APA will continue to advocate through various channels to provide this important flexibility to psychologists and their Medicare patients during the pandemic.

For more information, contact Laurel Stine, JD, at lstine@apa.org.

Asking States to Waive Licensing Restrictions in the Wake of COVID-19

APA signed on to a [letter](#) from higher education groups, professional associations and college health organizations that urges governors to temporarily suspend or modify state licensing restrictions for both in-person and telehealth services during the COVID-19 emergency. Although the focus is on college mental health, the directive would apply to all health-care professions. The letter follows [guidance](#) issued from the Department of Health and Human Services that asks governors to implement these and other actions related to the health-care workforce in their states.

For more information, contact Kenneth Polishchuk at kpolishchuk@apa.org.

Guiding States and Health Providers on Avoiding Disability-Based Discrimination

APA joined over 90 organizations in a [statement](#) to the Department of Health and Human Services that offers guidance to health-care professionals on how to avoid disability discrimination while treating patients with COVID-19. The statement comes at a time when hospitals are being forced to [ration care](#) when treating COVID-19 patients. It seeks to help physicians and triage teams be aware of conscious and unconscious biases against people with disabilities as they are making critical health-care decisions. The statement offers guidance to ensure that individuals with disabilities have an equal opportunity to receive life-sustaining treatments.

For more information, contact Ben Vonachen at bvonachen@apa.org.

Supporting Students with Disabilities

APA endorsed a [letter](#) to the Department of Education led by the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities that opposes any waivers to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The letter details the principles that must be upheld to maintain critical educational supports and civil rights for disabled students. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security [CARES] Act ([H.R. 748](#)) signed into law last week directs the department to send a list of waivers to Congress that could potentially weaken some of the most important federal protections for students with disabilities.

For more information, contact Kenneth Polishchuk at kpolishchuk@apa.org or Ben Vonachen at bvonachen@apa.org.

Shaping the NIH Strategic Plan Framework

In response to a request for information from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), APA has made several recommendations for the future of the [Strategic Plan Framework](#). APA is urging NIH to enhance workforce diversity and interdisciplinary research and training; improve coordination with the National Science Foundation; increase its focus on the health effects of climate change; recognize the importance of non-human animal models in research; increase the role of applied psychology and artificial intelligence in workforce development; redefine the definition of clinical trials to exclude basic behavioral and social science research; ensure balance among basic behavioral, translational and services research; and apply behavioral and social science research on pandemic preparation and response.

For more information, contact Geoff Mumford, PhD, at gmumford@apa.org or Howard Kurtzman, PhD, at hkurtzman@apa.org.

Join APA's Psychology Advocacy Network

Stay updated on legislative issues impacting psychology and receive action alerts directly to your inbox. [Sign up](#).



© APA Services, Inc.
750 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002

APA Services, Inc. is a legally separate companion organization to the American Psychological Association (APA). APA Services, Inc. supports advocacy and psychologists' economic and marketplace interests in ways that APA cannot. For more information, visit apaservices.org.

[Privacy_policy](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)