



[April 2020 Behavioral Health Update](#)

Advocacy and Regulatory Updates

[AHA requests assistance, guidance for behavioral health providers](#)

Providers caring for patients with behavioral health disorders face unique challenges in balancing safe public health measures and clinical protocols during the COVID-19 emergency, the AHA April 9 said in a [letter](#) to Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar. Specifically, AHA requested guidance on how to apply general guidelines around COVID-19 for this vulnerable patient population, including specialized guidance for inpatient psychiatric facilities, and on providing additional services such as medication management and use of telehealth modalities. It also urged the agency to ensure behavioral health services are appropriately reimbursed and behavioral health clinicians and professionals can receive emergency medical supplies and priority testing; relax staffing ratio requirements and certain restrictions on what tasks practitioners may perform; and preemptively plan for the likely surge of behavioral health patients that will follow the COVID-19 pandemic. The AHA [COVID-19 website](#) has the latest tools and resources to help hospitals and health systems respond to the pandemic.

[AHA participates on call with White House on mental health, COVID-19](#)

AHA participated in a conference call April 9 with President Donald Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and senior administration officials on their commitment to serving the American people facing mental health challenges as the result of COVID-19. Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use Elinore McCance-Katz, M.D., noted the new funding opportunity that will establish crisis service centers, including mobile crisis teams, across the nation. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said they are trying to make funding streams as flexible as possible so states can use it for multiple purposes, including behavioral health. AHA continues to work closely with the administration on these and other issues important to behavioral health providers and patients.

[Congress urged to consider value-based addiction recovery services payment](#)

The Alliance for Addiction Payment Reform, of which AHA is a convening member, recently [showcased](#) its value-based payment model for addiction and recovery support services at a briefing for congressional lawmakers and staff. AHA members are involved in the pilot program,

including Ascension Brighton Center for Recovery in Michigan. Raymond Waller, administrator of Brighton Center, is the 2020 Chair of AHA's Behavioral Health Council.

CMS issues FY 2021 proposed rule for inpatient psychiatric facilities

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services April 10 issued a proposed [rule](#) for the inpatient psychiatric facility prospective payment system for fiscal year 2021. CMS proposes to increase IPF payments by a net 2.4%, equivalent to \$100 million, in FY 2021. The 2.4% payment update is a reflection of a 3% market-basket update minus a productivity adjustment of 0.4 percentage points, an additional 0.2 percentage point offset for the outlier fixed-dollar loss threshold amount. In its press release announcing the rule, CMS acknowledged that the entire health care system is focused on responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency, and thus the proposed rule only includes proposals required by statute that affect Medicare payment to IPFs. CMS will accept comments on this rule through June 9. See the AHA [Regulatory Advisory](#) for more details on the proposed rule.

CARES Act reforms privacy law covering SUD treatment records

The Partnership to Amend 42 CFR Part 2, a coalition of nearly 50 health care organizations including the AHA, applauded Congress' important step to modernize privacy regulations affecting the disclosure of patients' substance use disorder treatment records. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, includes the reintroduced, AHA-supported Protecting Jessica Grubb's Legacy Act to more closely align 42 CFR Part 2 with HIPAA regulations. Additionally, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has released 42 CFR Part 2 [guidance](#) clarifying patient consent requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Joint Commission issues new COVID-19 FAQs

The Joint Commission has issued a new standards [FAQ](#) on monitoring patients at high risk for suicide who have known or suspected COVID-19.

DEA greenlights caps for controlled substances

As AHA urged in an April 1 [letter](#), the Drug Enforcement Agency [said](#) it is increasing annual caps for controlled substances whose supplies are in high demand due the COVID-19 crisis. DEA said it will increase the 2020 Aggregate Production Quotas by 15% for certain substances needed for the treatment of COVID-19, including fentanyl, morphine, hydromorphone, codeine, ephedrine, pseudoephedrine and certain controlled substance intermediates essential to their production.

Upcoming Events and Webinars, and new Resources

April 22 Webinar: Behavioral health services during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic presents unique challenges to providing behavioral health services across all care settings. [Register](#) for a webinar on April 22 from 2-3 p.m. ET. Senior leaders from Baltimore's Sheppard Pratt Health System, including President and CEO and AHA Trustee Harsh Trivedi, M.D., will discuss how they re-engineered care processes, developed new care protocols for agitated patients, and created a virtual emergency department assessment to decrease the number of psychiatric patients in the emergency

department during the COVID-19 surge. Sheppard Pratt also will discuss its efforts to support staff and build resilience during the crisis.

AHA COVID-19 call Thursdays at 2:30 p.m. ET

Executives and leaders from the nation's hospitals are invited each **Thursday at 2:30 p.m. ET** to an AHA call providing the latest information on the COVID-19 pandemic. Dial in at 800-469-8538, passcode 43576#. A replay will be available at 877-919-4059, passcode 35820478#, for 48 hours following the call. This call will continue for as long as needed.

New podcasts: Using telehealth to address behavioral health care

Shantanu Agrawal, M.D. , president and CEO of the National Quality Forum, and Arpan Waghray, M.D., executive medical director for behavioral medicine at Swedish Health Services in Seattle and chief medical officer at Well Being Trust, discuss the value of telehealth to address behavioral health disorders and pose questions for leadership teams in two new podcasts. Access the first podcast [here](#) and the second podcast [here](#). The AHA and NQF partnered to create the **free resource**, Redesigning Care: [A How-To Guide for Telebehavioral Health](#). CMS recently released to states an informational [bulletin](#) identifying opportunities for using telehealth to increase access to Medicaid services and treatment for substance use disorders during COVID-19.

AHA partnership to accelerate availability of PPE

The AHA is pleased to announce it partnered with Microsoft, Kaiser Permanente, consulting firm Kearney, Merit Solutions, and UPS to launch Protecting People Everywhere, powered by *HealthEquip*™. *HealthEquip* is a smart app that will match individuals and organizations donating personal protective equipment with local hospitals based on needs-criteria. The app also will track PPE donations and manage shipping through UPS to hospitals.

The AHA is sharing this app with hospitals through its [100 Million Mask Challenge](#) as a way for the AHA to help facilitate a more efficient means of distributing critically needed PPE to front-line health care workers. Hospitals and donors can register their PPE needs and supplies [here](#).

Postponing AHA Innovation Challenge

AHA is focused on helping hospitals and health system care for patients, communities and staff. As a result, we are postponing the AHA 2020 Innovation Challenge. We will provide you with more information as decisions are made. We appreciate your patience and support as we maneuver these dynamic and trying times.

Updates

Stories from the front lines

The AHA is collecting and sharing positive, [members-in-action stories](#) about the amazing work the field is doing every day to combat COVID-19 and care for all people affected – physically and emotionally. [Submit](#) personal narratives, raw videos or images. If you need inspiration, check out this [story](#) about a therapy dog comforting front-line health care workers, making life a little less stressful for clinicians, staff and emergency responders who need emotional support during the COVID-19 crisis.

Caring for yourself and others during the pandemic: Managing health care workers' stress

In this Schwartz Center [webinar](#), Patricia Watson, of the National Center for PTSD, discusses ways health care workers can manage stress as we face the ever-changing circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Joint AHA/NABH April behavioral health communication

This month's [edition](#) includes: a summary of the implications for behavioral health providers and patients of the \$2 Trillion Stimulus Bill to Address Covid-19 Pandemic; new CMS [guidance](#) for health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic; CMS's [waivers and policy changes](#) to broaden access to telehealth; and more. To access past *Behavioral Health Updates*, [click here](#).

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