



September 28, 2016

Medicare Reimbursement:

Improving Access to Mental Health Act of 2015 (S.2173/H.R. 3712)

Since launching our action alert in October, 2015, 1,848 advocates sent 6,151 emails to Congress about the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 2173/H.R. 3712)*. You can find the alert on our [web site](#). Please consider sending an [editable email](#) to your Members of Congress.

NASW members are still working on securing GOP support for the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act of 2015 (S.2173/H.R. 3712)*, which is important to social workers nationwide. In August, Dr. Angelo McClain sent a letter to each Chapter Executive Director providing information about *S.2173/H.R. 3712*, their Chapter's Congressional delegation, Congressional offices to target in their delegations, as well as a sample letter to use in outreach efforts. **We ask that Chapters reach out to their Congressional delegation by November to secure additional co-sponsors.**

Your direct outreach helps add co-sponsors to the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 2173/H.R. 3712)*. **In fact, the Massachusetts Chapter put these outreach efforts to use and was able to secure an additional co-sponsor, Michael Capuano (D-MA-7), which puts us at 16 co-sponsors in the House! Great work Massachusetts!**

Co-sponsors of the legislation include: (** indicates original sponsor; * indicates original cosponsor)

Senate

- Sen. Stabenow, Debbie [D-MI]** 10/08/2015
- Sen. Mikulski, Barbara A. [D-MD]* 10/08/2015
- Sen. Murphy, Christopher S. [D-CT] 02/25/2016

- Sen. Blumenthal, Richard [D-CT] 04/07/2016

House of Representatives

- Rep. Lee, Barbara [D-CA-13]** 10/08/2015
- Rep. Ashford, Brad [D-NE-2] 12/09/2015
- Rep. Bordallo, Madeleine Z. [D-GU-At Large]* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Brown, Corrine [D-FL-5]* 10/08/2015
- **Rep. Capuano, Michael E. [D-MA-7] 09/06/2016**
- Rep. Clarke, Yvette D. [D-NY-9]* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Cohen, Steve [D-TN-9] 10/16/2015
- Rep. DeFazio, Peter A. [D-OR-4] 04/11/2016
- Rep. Grijalva, Raul M. [D-AZ-3]* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Gutierrez, Luis V. [D-IL-4] 10/16/2015
- Rep. Honda, Michael M. [D-CA-17]* 10/08/2015
- Rep. McCollum, Betty [D-MN-4] 12/09/2015
- Rep. Moore, Gwen [D-WI-4] 10/16/2015
- Rep. Norton, Eleanor Holmes [D-DC-At Large]* 10/08/2015
- Rep. Schakowsky, Janice D. [D-IL-9] 10/20/2015
- Rep. Serrano, Jose E. [D-NY-15] 03/14/2016
- Rep. Watson Coleman, Bonnie [D-NJ-12]* 10/08/2015

NASW has secured supporters of the legislation, listed below:

- American Geriatrics Society
- Association for Ambulatory Behavioral Healthcare
- Clinical Social Work Association
- Council on Social Work Education
- Justice in Aging
- NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
- National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders
- National Coalition for Care Coordination (N3C)
- National League for Nursing
- The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care

NASW recognizes that the 114th Congress is drawing to a close. In an effort to prepare for next year, NASW has met with the *Improving Access to Mental Health Act (S. 2173/H.R. 3712)* champions, including the offices of Sen. Stabenow and Rep. Barbara Lee to discuss continued work on passing this vital piece of legislation.

Other Legislation:

NASW provides feedback on Independence at Home Act to Senate sponsors

The [Independence at Home Act of 2016 \(S. 3130\)](#) seeks to make permanent a home-based primary care demonstration program for Medicare beneficiaries who are older adults. Read the [NASW letter](#) to bill sponsors, which advocates for the role of social work in the program.

RAISE Family Caregivers Act

NASW signs on to [open letter](#) and [Politico ad](#) urging the House to pass the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage (RAISE) Family Caregivers Act (S.1719/H.R. 3099).

NASW joins SAVE for All Campaign in Advocating for EITC Expansion

NASW staff participated in Hill visits with the SAVE (Strengthening America's Values and Economy) for All Campaign. The SAVE for All Campaign seeks expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to adults without custodial children. NASW National Office staff met with the offices of Sens. Cantwell (D-WA), Manchin (D-WV), Feinstein (D-CA), Markey (D-MA), and Merkley (D-OR) to discuss this important issue.

Mental Health Reform Grassroots Effort

NASW partnered with allied organizations to push for consideration of the Mental Health Reform Act of 2016 (S. 2680). Late August, NASW sent out an action alert resulting in 773 advocates sending 1,576 e-mails to Senators. Since May, 1,676 advocates wrote 3,908 e-mails on this issue. Great work!

Electoral Work:

NASW-PACE Endorsements

NASW-PACE endorsed 133 incumbents/candidates for Congress in July. In September, NASW-PACE endorsed an additional 24 incumbents and one candidate, former Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI). To view a list of endorsed candidates, visit the [PACE page](#) on the NASW website. The September endorsed candidates will be posted soon.

NASW-PACE Phone Banks

NASW-PACE began phone banking from the National office on September 19. Volunteers are calling NASW members to encourage them to register to vote, volunteer for endorsed candidates and get out and vote. Volunteers were recruited from the DC-Metro area. On the first night three volunteers made 271 calls, speaking to 63 members and leaving messages with 165 members. The first state that volunteers are calling is Illinois because of the Senate race. The next state that will be targeted is New Hampshire, because of the Presidential race. Volunteers will be phone banking on most Monday nights through November 7. If you live in the DC-Metro area and are interested in volunteering for a phone bank, please contact Dina Kastner at dkastner.nasw@socialworkers.org or 202-336-8218.

Voters Rights

NASW staff is partnering with Social Work Helper on a voter registration drive that will target social workers across the country in the hopes of registering 5,000 new voters. As noted above, NASW is also organizing a telephone get out the vote drive from its national headquarters.

In September, NASW staff joined over 75 organizations from the National Voting Rights Coalition to develop strategies on increasing voter registration, guarding against voter suppression, and preventing voter intimidation.

Given the importance of this election and voters rights, NASW will post a social justice brief on voting rights with an emphasis on educating social workers about voting suppression. NASW staff will also disseminate voting registration tool kits, information about how members can participate as election monitors to prevent voter intimidation, and how to participate in state-level “down-ballot” voting.

Administration:

NASW submits comments on proposed Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for calendar year 2017

In early September, NASW submitted comments to CMS addressing Medicare Cost-Sharing, Telehealth Services, the Psychiatric Collaborative Care Model, 2017 Provider Payment Increase, and Skilled Nursing Facilities. Read [NASW’s response](#) to the [proposed rule](#).

Social Justice Priority Areas:

Criminal Justice

The Justice Roundtable Working Groups met this month to develop written *Transition Recommendations* for the new White House Administration. As is the protocol, the newly elected President’s transition team receives many such recommendations from a wide variety of constituencies. NASW staff contributed to the transition recommendations for the (1) Justice Roundtable’s Reentry Working Group; (2) The Justice Roundtable’s Drug Policy Working Group; and (3) The Vera Institute’s Solitary Confinement Roundtable’s isolation and special housing policy recommendations.

As a separate effort, **NASW is partnering with the American Psychological Association (APA)** on a collaborative criminal justice mental health document. The collaboration includes a number of national organizations including those from the mental health provider workforce serving justice involved persons as well as stakeholders advocating for and implementing comprehensive mental health services in jails and prisons.

The initial meeting occurred on September 19th with the aim to complete a final transition recommendations document by November, 2016.

Coalition Work:

NASW participated in coalition work with:

- Eldercare Workforce Alliance
- Leadership Council of Aging Organizations
- Social Work and Health Care Work Group (National Coalition on Care Coordination)
- Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- Coalition on Human Needs
- Mental Health Liaison Group

Criminal Justice

Grand Challenges' Decarceration Working Group

NASW participated in the Grand Challenges Conference held in St. Louis in late September. This conference included members of each of the Grand Challenge Working Groups, including the Smart Decarceration Working Group of which NASW has a leadership role. The conference reinforced the commitment of each working group to include more social workers in developing policy and programmatic deliverables related to criminal justice reform.

Safe Alternatives to Segregation Advisory Committee Annual Meeting

NASW met with the American Psychological Association to begin planning a jointly organized national criminal justice mental health stakeholders meeting projected to meet the last week in November.

Mental Health Liaison Group Meeting

1. Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act (H.R. 4374) – Amy Kelbick, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL-9)

H.R. 4374 is very personal for Rep. Schakowsky as it stems from a family friend's son who committed suicide while attending Harvard as well as the shooting at Northern Illinois University in 2008. Sadly, this is a growing issue as less than 70% of college student's access mental health services. In fact, it is estimated that there is only one counselor for every 1,654 students with 19% of reporting colleges have no on-campus programs at all.

With Senator Durbin (D-IL) submitting a companion piece of legislation (S. 2685) and more than 20 organizations (including NASW) endorsing the initiative, the Mental Health on Campus Improvement Act is moving steadily forward as Congress considers Mental Health reform.

Should it pass, H.R. 4374 would accomplish three things:

(1) Establish a grant program to fund personnel to provide mental health services to students. Currently, there is a \$15 million authorization for this program in the Democrat's alternative to the House version of Mental Health Reform (H.R. 2646);

(2) Implement a public awareness campaign around mental and behavioral health to reduce the stigma associate with mental illness;

(3) Create an interagency working group on college mental health to promote federal agency collaboration and support innovations in mental health services on college campuses.

2. **Organization Introductions:**

NASW and the Trevor Project introduced their organizations.

3. **Save the Date- Event :**

Debbie F. Plotnick, MSS, MLSP, Vice President, Mental Health and Systems Advocacy, Mental Health America reminded us that the second annual Destination Dignity event, an opportunity for public visibility, community engagement, coalition and activation in support of mental health in an atmosphere of dignity, is Monday, October 10. October 10 is also world mental health day. Destination Dignity attendees are gathering between 10-11am at the reflecting pool in Washington, DC. There will also be a virtual rally for those unable to travel to Washington DC. You can find out about the event or virtual rally on the [Destination Dignity web site](#).

4. **Save the Date-Briefing:**

On Tuesday, October 4, at 12:00pm in the Gold Room (2168 Rayburn House Office Building, NASW and additional sponsors are hosting a briefing entitled: Future Directions in Mental Health Research: The View from Psychological Science. This briefing will focus on the future direction of mental health research.

5. **National Grassroots/Social Media (S. 2680) Advocacy Week and Other Coalition Updates:**

Multiple mental health groups (including NASW) participated in a week of grassroots support for the Mental Health Reform Act of 2016 (S. 2680). See more details on NASW contribution above.

The Next MHLG meeting is October 14.

Futures Without Violence has done a summary of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Medicaid – reversal of free care schools; states can now draw down funds if they submit a plan.

Hillary Clinton has a Mental Health platform document.

Support Letters:

NASW has signed onto a number of letters of support. You can find a list of letters of support on our [web page](#). A sample of letters from August and September are listed below.

- [NASW signs on to open letter urging the House to pass the Recognize, Assist, Include, Support, and Engage \(RAISE\) Family Caregivers Act \(9/6/2016\)](#)

- NASW signs on to Leaders Engaged on Alzheimer’s Disease (LEAD) Coalition letter supporting a proposal to establish Medicare coverage for assessment and care planning for people living with dementia (9/6/2016)
- NASW signs on to *Politico* ad urging the House to pass the RAISE Family Caregivers Act (9/7–9/8/2016)
- NASW signs on to national letter calling on Congress to move on funding bill and human needs issues (9/8/16)
- NASW signs on to Coalition for Whole Health comments to the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force (8/31/2016)
- NASW Signs on to Letter Supporting Election Protection: the link to the letter is as follows: (8/31/16)
- NASW Signs on to Letter Supporting Fair Counting of Prison Inmates in 2020 Census: The link to the letter is as follows: (8/30/16)
- NASW Signs onto Letter to the Department of Justice Seeking Rules Changes related to Deaths in Custody by Law Enforcement Agencies. (08/29/2016)
- NASW signs on to open letter supporting the Beneficiary Enrollment Notification and Eligibility Simplification (BENES) Act (8/22/16)
- NASW signs on to open letter affirming the Administration for Community Living’s (ACL’s) efforts to enhance LGBT older adults’ access to Older Americans Act–funded services and urging ACL to strengthen related state requirements (8/22/16)

NASW has also submitted its own comments to the Administration and Congress. You can find this list on our [web page](#) as well.

- NASW writes letter providing feedback on the Independence at Home Act (9/1/2016)
- NASW Response to CMS-1654-P: Proposed Revisions to Part B for 2017 (8/31/2016)