

## **MENTAL HEALTH ACCESS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2021**

**Increase Access to Mental Health services for Seniors, Veterans, and those with Disabilities.**

**[H.R. 432](#) and [S. 828](#)**

Bipartisan legislation in the House and Senate would improve access to mental health, and shrink the mental health provider gap services by:

- Allowing clients not to experience a gap in mental health services which can lead to hospitalization, or the use of medication to cope which may lead to addiction of opioids or worse.
- Permitting Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors to be reimbursed by Medicare for services rendered to clients age 65 and above, United States Veterans and the Disabled.
- Authorizes Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors to develop discharge plans for post-hospital mental health services.

Mental health clients of Licensed Professional Counselors are unable to continue services with their counselors due to current Centers for Medicare and Medicare Services regulations that have not been updates since 1989.

Licensed Professional Counselors can accept Medicaid, Private Insurance, Tri-Care and VA Benefits for services rendered. Counselors may *only* treat Medicare clients in Opioid Treatment Programs (OTP); however, the OTP receives the Medicare reimbursement not the Counselor.

### **Please Co-Sponsor to Support Increasing Access to Mental Health Care**

- **54 million+** U.S. residents age 65 and older would have access to an increased number of mental health providers. Medicare beneficiaries grow by 10,000 additional people daily.
- **200,000** Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors would shrink the nation's mental health provider shortage, including in rural and underserved communities where mental health providers are more likely to be Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors.
- **Over 50%** of counselors have been forced to turn away clients once they reach age 65 due to the gap in Medicare provider eligibility.
- The **COVID-19 pandemic** has hit Medicare beneficiaries hard. So many Americans are in urgent need of behavioral health services because of isolation and stress from the COVID-19 crisis. This bill offers a greater choice of mental health providers so they can get the mental health care they need.
- **1 out of 8** E.R. Hospital visits involve a mental health or substance use disorder. Untreated mental health conditions can create a burden on hospitals and individual beneficiaries. The reimbursement rate for a single day of inpatient psychiatric hospitalization is equivalent to approximately twelve 45-minute counseling sessions.

During the previous Congressional cycle (116<sup>th</sup>), the Mental Health Access Improvement Act gained historic bipartisan support, with 123 cosponsors in the [House](#) and 31 cosponsors in the [Senate](#). The House bill was voted out of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Supporting the Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2021 is vital to the health of our nation. Thank you for your support. For more information, contact the ACA Government Affairs and Public Policy team at [advocacy@counseling.org](mailto:advocacy@counseling.org).