

Talking Points

On January 31, 2020, a public health emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic was declared. Since that time, Americans' emotional, mental, and physical health and wellness have been significantly impacted in ways no one could have predicted.

In a recent survey of ACA members, counselors indicated that most of their clients' mental health conditions have worsened since the pandemic began. Ninety-six percent (96%) of respondents indicated that clients' loneliness had worsened, followed by social isolation (95%) and anxiety (94%). Employment and financial concerns (91%), depression (90%), grief and loss (82%), acute stress/post-traumatic stress (80%), and substance use (75%) also appear to be worsening for many counseling clients.

- The public health emergency declaration has allowed professional counselors to provide much-needed counseling services to families, adults, couples, teens, and children across the U.S. Further, the public health emergency declaration, in combination with the expansion of several telebehavioral health initiatives, have given valuable flexibility to professional mental health counselors across the nation resulting in greater access to care for millions of Americans.
- In order to continue responding to the mental health needs of millions of Americans, it is imperative that Medicare coverage of telebehavioral health services be permanently expanded.

I urge you to make the telebehavioral health flexibilities permanent so that licensed professional counselors can continue to offer the highest quality care possible, during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.