



Federal and State Issues Affecting LPCs

Quick Tips:

- Attend town hall meetings and campaign events.
- Talk to the candidates, and ask them their positions on issues relevant to counseling.
- Identify yourself as a licensed professional counselor, a member of ACA, and their constituent, or potential constituent.
- Tell them how one of the following issues (depending on whether the candidate is running for federal or state office) impacts you. Remember, *brevity is key*.

Medicare Reimbursement:

Counseling is not covered by Medicare.

- Despite the fact that Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) have education, training, and practice rights equivalent to or greater than existing covered providers they are still not covered under Medicare. LPCs are licensed to practice in all 50 states, and are currently covered by private sector health plans.

Counseling is covered under Medicaid and many employer-based insurance plans.

- When a client reaches the age of 65 and they leave Medicaid or employer provided insurance, they find that their counselor is no longer covered because Medicare does not take over. At a time when their income usually is decreasing, they find they may have to pay more to continue receiving counseling, change mental health providers, or go without mental health services.
- There are twice as many counselors in rural areas as other mental health professionals combined. Seniors in these areas may not have access to any mental health professional other than counselors, but find that Medicare will not cover that option.

Bipartisan legislation introduced in the House and Senate would permit LPCs to be reimbursed by Medicare.

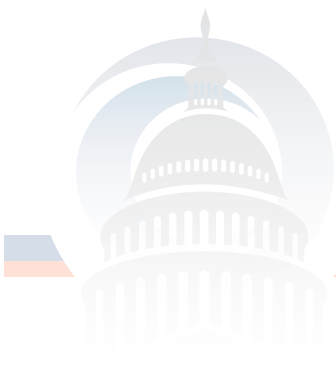
- In the Senate, the Seniors Mental Health Access Improvement Act, S. 1879 was introduced by Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) and Debbie Stabenow (D-MI). In the House of Representatives, the Mental Health Access Improvement Act, H.R. 3032 was introduced by Representative John Katko (R-NY) and Mike Thompson (D-CA).
- Ask candidates to support S. 1879 and H.R.3032.

Federal Funding for School Counseling Programs:

Congress is providing \$1.17 billion dollars to the Department of Education for The Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant Program (SSAE) for fiscal year 2019.

- Among other things these **grants fund activities that expand access to, or coordinate resources for, important school-based mental health services and supports**. These activities may include the development of critical tools such as trauma-informed care and the establishment and maintenance of school counseling and bullying-prevention programs. Schools will be able to hire more school counselors, create more opportunities for mental-health –related programs, and develop programs designed to help create a safe and healthy school environment which helps students and their families.

ACA has advocated for increased funding in the SSAE program. You can **thank your representatives for this \$70 million increase** and ask them to continue to support the program in fiscal year 2020 budget.



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The Congressional Mental Health Caucus:

The Congressional Mental Health Caucus serves as a bipartisan forum where Members of Congress and their staff work to elevate mental health issues as a national priority.

- They do so by holding informational briefings to pursue common legislative goals and raising awareness of important mental health issues. **If your House member is a caucus member, please thank them. If not, ask them to join.** You can find the list of members here.

State Issues for State Candidates:

Every state has a licensure board for counselors.

- You can explain the importance of the licensure process and how ensuring that only trained and experienced counselors are allowed to see clients is good for both the client and the LPC.

Conversion therapy for minors.

- The following states have banned conversion therapy for minors: California, Oregon, Illinois, Vermont, New Jersey, New Mexico, Connecticut, Nevada, Rhode Island, Washington, Maryland, New Hampshire, Delaware, and Hawaii. Many other states will be considering bans on conversion therapy for minors next year. You can explain your views on this issue. School counseling and school safety/mental health legislation are also going to be considered in state legislatures going forward.

The short term insurance program has recently been expanded by the federal government.

- These policies currently last a year instead of three months, and can then be renewed. **They do not have to cover preexisting conditions** or provide mental health coverage. However, states can pass legislation that would require them to do so. This is a new issue that should be brought to the attention of state legislators.

ACA Information:

The ACA Government Affairs Latest News page and the Take Action page are useful sources of information about federal and state issues and the legislative campaigns ACA is conducting. [counseling.org/government-affairs/public-policy](https://www.counseling.org/government-affairs/public-policy)