MEDICARE EXPANDS ACCESS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

APA yesterday announced CMS’s Further expansion of telehealth coverage for Medicare recipients, to include psychological and neuropsychological testing and group psychotherapy during the coronavirus emergency. This is a win for psychology!

Please note: The CMS announcement said this waiver allows new audio and video services (not audio-only phone). Both CPA and APA continue to strongly urge the expansion of Medicare coverage to include audio-only phone services.

For information about billing and coding for these newly covered telehealth services, please see Billing for Professional Telehealth Services During the Public Health Emergency. A list of all Medicare telehealth services can be found here.

CALIFORNIA INSURANCE COMMISSIONER SEEKS TO EXPAND TELEHEALTH ACCESS

Earlier this week, California’s Department of Insurance Commissioner, Ricardo Lara, sent strong guidance to the Department of Insurance regulated health plans (covering approximately 2 million individuals) to expand telehealth coverage during the COVID-19 emergency. His directive specifically asked plans to do the following:

- Allow all network providers to use all available and appropriate modes of telehealth delivery including, but not limited to, synchronous video, and telephone-based service delivery.

- Immediately implement reimbursement rates for telehealth services that mirror payment rates for an equivalent office visit.

- Eliminate barriers to providing medically and clinically appropriate care using appropriate telehealth delivery models.

- Use telehealth service delivery methods to enable consumers to have access to mental health and substance use disorder services, family therapy, and behavioral health services, including services to treat autism, among others.

This follows similar action by the California Department of Managed Health Care, which regulates HMO plans. CPA advocated for these changes last
month with our fellow mental health provider associations. We will continue to work with regulators to ensure full access to telehealth services for all enrollees during this critical time. To view the Insurance Commissioner’s Notice, click here.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS EASES LICENSE RENEWALS
Please Read if Your License is Due to be Renewed March 31-June 30, 2020

The Department of Consumer Affairs, that oversees the operations of all licensing boards, has temporarily eased license renewal during the COVID-19 state emergency. Any licensee whose renewal date is MARCH 31-JUNE 30, 2020 will be able to renew without continuing education credits. The credits will have to be completed and reported six months after the state of emergency has been lifted. If you have completed your 36 credits, please renew as you normally would, and no other action will need to be taken. We anticipate the Board of Psychology will have more detailed information in the coming days.

FEDERAL AND STATE ECONOMIC RESOURCES FOR THOSE IMPACTED BY COVID-19

Here are some resources for those whose employment has been affected by the COVID-19 crisis. The following is a collection of state and federal resources meant to ease the financial impact at this time. CPA cannot offer individual consultation or advice about your individual situation and what relief you may qualify for, but we want to pass on these key websites:

CA Labor and Workforce Agency: Programs Offered to Californians Affected by COVID-19

California Employment Development Department: To file a Disability or Unemployment Insurance (UI) Claim, or determine if you qualify

US Small Business Association Loans: To file for a disaster loan

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT: CALIFORNIA HEALTH CORPS

On Monday, the Governor announced the formation of the California Health Corps. The Governor and his Administration are hoping to recruit currently licensed or recently retired health care professionals (including psychologists) to work with patients as the state adds an anticipated 50,000 new hospital beds in temporary sites across the state. Compensation, liability insurance coverage, and mode of service delivery will be determined at the individual sites. For more information or to apply, please click here (please note: this is a website of the Office of the Governor. Please contact gov.ca.gov).