Advocating Across a Changing Landscape

I started this particular CICO Update on numerous occasions and each time what I wrote or the direction it was heading was nearly irrelevant when I came back to finish. So fair warning, by the time you are reading this the landscape will likely have changed again and pieces of this may not be completely relevant to the current situation. To paint the scene for you, at this exact moment, Governor Pritzker recently called for the legislature to hold session to deal with pressing matters and the legislature has finally budged and is scheduled to head back to Springfield in exactly one week.

The last information coming out of Springfield was that the session will cover seven topics:

2. The purpose of the Special Session shall be solely to consider new or pending legislative measures in relation to:
   a. The COVID-19 pandemic or other disaster;
   b. The State budget and its implementation;
   c. Economic recovery, infrastructure projects, and funding thereof;
   d. The explanation, arguments for and against, and the form for constitutional amendments as required under the Illinois Constitutional Amendment Act;
   e. Laws or authority scheduled to be repealed prior to June 1, 2021;
   f. The 2020 General Election and the State Board of Elections; and
   g. The hospital assessment program.


Unfortunately, the Proclamation means that most, if not all, of the legislation that IMHCA was monitoring prior to the surge of the pandemic will not be moving forward this spring session and will likely need to wait until 2021 for consideration by legislators.

The limited legislative agenda combined with the cancellation of the Counselor Day on the Hill may seem discouraging, but I want to assure you that IMHCA has not stopped advocating for counselors. In many ways, IMHCA has stepped up its advocacy in this time of crisis. IMHCA staff and Executive Consultant have been working tirelessly to keep our members informed with the constant changes and have advocated for matters regarding telehealth and distance counseling. Through IMHCA’s advocacy efforts, the IDFPR approved remote supervision through July 31, 2020 for those completing the supervision requirement to gain their LCPC license. This is a huge benefit to LPCs currently seeking their clinical licensure to not have to lose significant supervision hours during the shelter-in-place order.

We want to thank each one of our members who have reached out for guidance and let us know the issues that are affecting them during this pandemic. Without you, our members, our advocacy would not be possible and without your input, we would not be able to address what is directly
affecting your day-to-day work. You are out there in the trenches and, as always, IMHCA is here to support and advocate for mental health counselors across our great state!

**Federal Legislation**

**Medicare HR 945**
Our website has a link under proposed federal legislation to an example advocacy statement and action steps. [https://www.imhca.org/federal-laws-proposed/](https://www.imhca.org/federal-laws-proposed/)

**S.2661 - National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020**
Senate - 05/13/2020 Passed Senate with an amendment by Voice Vote

In Committee

On March 27, 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) was signed into law. Section 3704 of the CARES Act authorizes Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) and Federally Qualified Health Clinics (FQHCs) to provide telebehavioral health services to Medicare beneficiaries during the COVID-19 health emergency.

Medicare telehealth services generally require an interactive audio and video telecommunications system that permits real-time communication between the practitioner and the patient. RHCs and FQHCs with this capability can immediately provide and receive payment for telehealth services to patients covered by Medicare for the duration of the COVID-19 health emergency.

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