Introduction
Welcome to the Texas Psychological Association’s (TPA) quarterly report. The information contained within is intended to provide a brief snapshot of the advocacy efforts conducted by TPA during each three-month period.

Legislative Advocacy

Upcoming Hearings
Texas legislative committees have begun posting notices for upcoming hearings, and there are a few that are particularly important for the future of healthcare in the state.

First, the House Select Committee on Health Care Reform will meet on August 4th and 5th. That committee will be studying “the implications of excessive health care costs on the efficacy of Texas Medicaid and the private health insurance market.” Committee members will also be monitoring the implementation of current price transparency requirements and evaluating innovative, fiscally positive options to ensure Texans have access to affordable care.

On September 13th and 14th, the House Public Health Committee will meet. One of the pieces of legislation they’ll be monitoring is HB 4, which allowed reimbursement for audio-only behavioral health services in the Medicaid program. The committee will also be studying the impact of fentanyl-related overdoses and current telemedicine trends.

TPA will be monitoring these committees and providing comments as needed. We will be sure to keep everyone updated as these important discussions progress.

Regulatory Advocacy

Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists

TSBEP Special Meeting
A special meeting of TSBEP was called by the Chair in response to the Uvalde tragedy. The meeting was held on June 30th, but it did not have a traditional agenda. Instead, it functioned as an opportunity to discuss ways in which the licensure board could remove barriers and increase access to care. TPA provided comments, highlighting the point that lowering licensure standards is not an appropriate way to increase access to providers. Very few applicants are unable to meet the current standards, and the agency lowering these standards would result in substandard care and a lack of parity with other states. Instead, TPA recommended new incentives, such as lowering licensure and renewal fees for providers in health professional shortage areas and creating an expedited licensure process for those providers. TPA also shared past and future efforts at the legislature that address access to care.

There were no rules proposed during the meeting, but overall the discussion was positive. There were a few proposals that would have lowered standards for applicants, but they were largely rejected by the majority of board members. Most of the recommendations for future discussions revolved around incentives for providers and supervisors to ensure that the agency is doing everything in its power to expand the pipeline of new applicants. TPA will continue to work with the board to develop agency and legislative recommendations, and we will be sure to keep membership informed as these proposals begin to solidify.
Texas Health and Human Services

SHARS Telemedicine Proposals Published

HHSC has published proposed modifications to its School Health and Related Services (SHARS) Handbook. This proposal would implement HB 4, which instructed the agency to expand its telemedicine and telehealth offerings. The proposal expressly states that individual and group psychotherapy services, including audio-only services, are reimbursable when provided to students enrolled in the Medicaid program.