National Council for Behavioral Health

Association Executives Teleconference Summary Notes

Tuesday, April 28, 2020

2:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET

Participants: Jeremy Blair, Matt Brooks, Melanie Brown-Woofter, Gian-Carl Casa, Danette Castle, Shelly Chandler, Ann Christian, Le Ondra Clark-Harvey, Lauri Cole, Paul Curtis, Bahney Dedolph, Terry Dosch, Lori Doyle, Mark Drennan, Annette Dubas, Candy Espino, Mark Fontaine, Doyle Forrestal, Robyn Garrett, Linda Grant, Mandy Gilman, Lauren Grimes, Shannon Hall, Lisa Henick, Kimberley Higgs, Julia Jernigan, Lee Johnson, Kyle Kessler, Mark Levota, Marvin Lindsey, John Magnuson, Brent McGinty, Jinny Palen, Michelle Ponce, Carolyn Petrak, Sara Potter, Andrea Smyth, Julie Tessler, John Tessoni, Ellyn Wilber, and Mary Windecker.

Staff in Attendance: Chuck Ingoglia, Jeannie Campbell, Brett Beckerson, Frankie Berger, Neal Comstock, Rebecca Farley David, Sara Haywood, Stephanie Katz, Diane Mallard, Joel Nepomuceno, Joe Parks, Michael Petruzelli, Sarah Surgenor, Mohini Venkatesh, Reyna Taylor

**Summary Notes:**

**COVID-19 Policy Update**

Presented by Reyna Taylor

Reyna provided a Federal update and let Association Executives know that talks regarding thenext COVID-19 legislative relief package are ongoing. On the Democratic side, they will focus on relief for state and local government and unemployment insurance. She discussed how this (4th) package is what we are focused on with our $38 billion request for assistance for behavioral health providers.

Reyna also said that recently passed Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) included $30 billion for Medicare providers and $20 billion for providers based on total net revenue including Medicare, Medicaid, and any state funding streams. She suggested that all members apply for funds from this additional $20 billion, because even if you do not get a reimbursement, this will get your organization’s information into the government’s system (portal) which could expedite future funding.

Chuck Ingoglia said that some members received small payments, and these were based on Medicare fee for service. He suggested going to the government portal and applying with a record of your total revenue to make your organization eligible for additional payments. He also mentioned we are working with Health and Human Services (HHS) and they are trying figure out how to get more money to Medicaid providers. Chuck said we are trying to get the funds directly to providers and by going to the portal, this is a way to get on their radar screen. Reyna also mentioned that it would be easier if organizations have a Medicare PIN number already.

Reyna also discussed the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services’ (SAMHSA) grants for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs). She said they are awarding $250 million to 166 organizations.

Chuck stated that the list of CCBHCs is on the SAMHSA website and the National Council will send it around. Reyna said that in addition to the list, we will also send around the press release from SAMHSA. She said that we are focused on our large ask and hope that behavioral health organizations will not be left behind.

Robyn Garrett (GA) said that a couple of her members tested the portal yesterday and that tax return info from 2018 was required. She said she reached out to HHS directly but could not get an answer to how to access funds without tax documents, which many providers do not have. Chuck said he will reach out to HHS and see if he can find out. He said we will compose a list of questions and Robyn asked if others on the call have anything to include, to please send it to her.

Shannon Hall (MD) asked if organizations doing purely psychiatric rehabilitation and not providing services under Medicare can use the portal. Reyna clarified that for now, Medicare providers are the only ones eligible, but the next set of funding should include reimbursement for providers under Medicaid. Shannon also asked if Medicare providers should include non-Medicare information. Reyna said yes, submissions should include all revenue.

Shelly Chandler (IA) asked about the funds allocated for Medicaid providers. Chuck said that CMS is trying to figure out how to move funding to Medicaid providers.

Danette Castle (TX) asked how much is set aside under Medicare and Chuck responded that there is $30 billion set aside for Medicare providers, but he is not sure how that will be divided up between the different groups, including behavioral health providers.

Doyle Forrestal (CO) inquired about SAMHSA applications being denied and Chuck responded that about 7-8 were not approved. He said that the denial of Minnesota’s application was based on technical errors, but he is not sure about the others that were denied. He also mentioned that there is a lot of competition.

Mary Windecker (MT) stated that there is Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding available for cost associated for emergencies, staffing, PPE and that organizations can apply for those. Applications are due at the end of day on April 30th. Reyna stated that information about this is available on the COVID-19 page on the National Council website as well.

**Council Announcements**

Presented by Jeannie Campbell

Jeannie discussed how the Association Executive and Board meetings will still be held this spring, but will be held virtually. She also stated that meetings will be spread out and we will send out a working agenda. The week of June 15th is when many of the meetings will take place, specifically:

* Association Executive Meeting on June 16th
* Public Policy Meeting on June 18th
* Addictions Committee Meeting on June 19th
* Policy Institute will be held on June 23rd and the virtual Hill Day will be held on June 24th

**Open Discussion**

Mark Fontaine (FL) asked for clarification on what a “virtual” Hill Day will entail. Jeannie stated that it will have a virtual platform with Members of Congress. The Policy Institute meeting will tie into the action alerts. Then the full Hill Day will be held virtually following day.

Matt Brooks (IN) inquired about feedback from anyone who has met with congressional staff on Zoom and how they are reacting. Julie Tessler (VT) stated that they had a meeting on Wednesday with their congressman by Zoom. She said it has been historically difficult to get face time with Vermont Members of Congress, but they are now more willing to have face to face meetings on Zoom. Reyna also stated that Zoom meetings are good for smaller groups and that it is sometimes easier to create a human connection through smaller Zoom meetings rather than larger in-person meetings.

Matt stated that he is amazed how folks have adjusted to telehealth. He stated that in Indiana, revenue shortages are going away because behavioral health organizations are able to churn out call after call. Matt has wondered how to keep these successes in place after the pandemic. Chuck said the Public Health Emergency Declaration will allow for things to continue for 22 months after the pandemic and the successes will be used to make the case for why we need to preserve these. Chuck also stated we are partnering with Qualifax on a member survey to see how well telehealth is working for behavioral health providers.

Danette stated that audio only behavioral telehealth has been very helpful and they have to explore the options between the provider and the recipient with what makes the most sense in the situation. She stated that they have a full range of options based on variety of factors.

Julie stated that her providers are losing money on telehealth issues because many older adults do not have video capable phones.

Andrea Smyth (NY) stated that it is difficult to have full behavioral telehealth sessions with kids. She stated it is difficult to keep them on the phone for more than 20 minutes and many of her member providers deal with children.

Mark Levota (DC) stated that he is worried that the standard for providing care in different modalities could put organizations at a risk for being reimbursed less.

Chuck expressed concern about state budgets post-COVID-19 and said we need to be getting ready to make our case for budget funding.

Lee Johnson (TX) asked if other states are hearing about virtual legislative sessions. Paul Curtis (CA) stated that that he has heard that the California legislature goes back next week and that participation will be limited to one member and one staff member. He also stated that they have made clear that no budget items not related to COVID-19 will be considered. Julie stated that when a virtual legislative session is happening, texting legislators during the sessions is key.

Mark Fontaine requested that the National Council prepare a draft editorial around the value of mental health and substance abuse services. Sarah Surgenor said that this is already in the works.

Annette Dubois (NB) asked how states will distribute CARES Act funds they have received. Robyn said that she is currently doing a laundry list of positives regarding telehealth that have had an impact so organizations may be able to provide telehealth services beyond the public emergency. Chuck said are happy to work with her on that.

Matt raised concern about managed care companies being provided government funds on a per member per month rate but then not passing these funds on to behavioral health providers. He recommended that we rethink payment methodologies to get those dollars back.

John Magnuson (MN) asked about state legislation on telehealth and how it has been extended in other states. He stated that a State Senator in Minnesota is moving forward on extending telehealth and said any information would be appreciated. Chuck said we want telehealth flexibilities to stay in place for at least 22 months or until a vaccine is developed.

Jeannie gave an update on the National Council’s mask order. She stated that a partial shipment is making its way to the U.S. from South Korea. We are also ready to order more masks as soon as we get the masks into the hands of our members.

**Next Association Executives Teleconference**

May 5, 2020 2:00 PM ET