National Council for Behavioral Health

Association Executives Teleconference Summary Notes

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

1:30 – 2:30 p.m. ET

Participants: Laura Aldinger, Melanie Brown-Woofter, Nadia Chait, Shelly Chandler, Tom Chard, Le Ondra Clark-Harvey, John Coppola, Paul Curtis, Paul Demple, Terry Dosch, Lori Doyle, Mark Drennan, Annette Dubas, Candy Espino, Mark Fontaine, Doyle Forrestal, Mandy Gilman, Lauren Grimes, Shannon Hall, Lisa Henick, Kimberley Higgs, Cynthia Humphrey, Heather Jefferis, Lee Johnson, Kyle Kessler, Roland Lamy, Mark Levota, Marvin Lindsey, John Magnuson, Brent McGinty, Jinny Palen, Jorge Petit, Carolyn Petrak, Sara Potter, Mary-Linden Salter, Shete Shannon, Malory Shaughnessy, Andrea Smyth, Christine Stoner-Mertz, Julie Tessler, John Tessoni, Ellyn Wilber, and Mary Windecker.

Staff in Attendance: Jeannie Campbell, Frankie Berger, Neal Comstock, Diane Mallard, Joel Nepomuceno, Joe Parks, Michael Petruzelli, Sarah Surgenor, and Reyna Taylor

**Summary Notes:**

**COVID-19 Policy Update**

Presented by Reyna Taylor –

Reyna Taylor stated that the next COVID-19 legislative relief package (3.5) will be voted on this afternoon in the Senate. In the package, there is an additional $310 billion in Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) funds, $60 billion in assistance for smaller banks, $10 billion in Economic Injury Disaster Loans, $75 billion for health care providers, and an additional $25 billion for testing. She said we do not yet have insight on what the definition of health care provider is in the bill, but hopefully it will include our members. Reyna also said we are advocating with our brother and sister association for funding for behavioral health providers in the next COVID-19 legislative relief legislation after this one (4.0). She stated that we are asking for $38 billion and that we are coordinating with other associations to present a united voice. Reyna also said we have gotten pushback from some legislators who are telling us that our providers are eligible for funds in the 3.5 legislation.

Reyna also said that we have been using the survey results as talking points. She noted that some of the most impactful data show that the safety net is crumbling, layoffs are eminent, and most organizations have less than three months of cash on hand. Reyna said that we have been telling policy makers that if we do not shore up safety net funding now, we will be in crisis mode in three months. Some data points to support this include:

* 90% of the respondents cited they have already closed a program
* 47% are planning layoffs
* 82.9% don’t have enough personal protection equipment (PPE) for two months of operations
* 61.2% or organizations can survive for three months or less under the current conditions

We will push out the survey every two weeks so we can get a pulse to what is happening in real time, Reyna said.

Shannon Hall (MD) said that her members who should have access to funding have not had any success in accessing funds and wondered if we could ask which of our member organizations have received funds. Reyna agreed and stated that this is why it is so important to have specificity as to how a behavioral health organization is defined in legislation.

Tom Chard (AK) asked about what is being done to ensure that funding that goes to states does end up being used for filling budget holes. He mentioned that the pushback he has gotten is that there is money for healthcare in the third legislative package, but none of his members have had success in accessing funding. He wanted to know if we have suggested advocacy language that focuses on the state level so not to duplicate federal efforts. Paul Curtis (CA) said that in California, they have their own funding request for $100 million in state funds asking for help for their members and that Tom can use the language contained in that request.

John Coppola (NY) said that a statistic he read is that for every 1% increase in unemployment, the addiction rate goes up 3%, which illustrates the pivotal role behavioral health organizations play. There was also discussion how community-based organizations have had to absorb those who were in hospitals due to being displaced by COVID-19 patients.

Paul said he is working with the National Council to get Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s (D-CA) attention on how are critical our members are in keeping people out of emergency rooms and how important it is that we keep behavioral health organizations funded.

Sarah Surgenor mentioned she would be willing to share a template op-ed Doyle Forrestal (CO) said that Colorado is expecting very large budget cuts but says governors cannot use the stimulus checks to back fill budget cuts. She also stated that she is concerned that without behavioral care organizations, that people on Medicaid will access more expensive care, including going to prison, because they are not getting treatment.

Reyna pointed to the fact that as people are being released from prison for social distancing, we are seeing an increased percentage of people who have mental health and addictions coming to our member’s doors, and the fact that programs are closing is counter-constructive. She said we need to be able to welcome people who need help into the behavioral care community.

Doyle discussed a Colorado waiver for reimbursement of telephonic and telehealth care expiring in 90 days. She asked for input on what language would look like asking for extension. Andrea Summerville (WY) said that in Wyoming, they were able to get legislation passed to make telehealth reimbursement permanent. John Magnuson (MN) said he just got back from meeting with CMS and it was favorable. He said when the emergency declaration expires, that telehealth waiver would extend for 60 days beyond that time, but that CMS is in the process of making that permanent.

Doyle asked about PPE and when funds would be available for that. Reyna said that the new funds should be available in the same time frame as the rest of the $310 billion in the 3.5 legislation.

Mark Drennan (WV) asked if anyone has had success in getting retainer payments Robyn stated they are in conversations about retainer payments in Georgia and that they have had success with home and community-based services and long-term care, but not behavioral care. Julie Tessler (VT) said that homecare providers in Vermont are getting retainer payments with 0% or 10% payback.

Roland Lamy (NH) said that their members in New Hampshire are getting paid prospectively every month by managed care entitles based on 75% of their business. He said they coordinated with long term care providers and put forth a program to the Governor to get retention payments for front line workers. Roland said that they will get $30 a week for front line workers for a total of $88 million.

Paul Demple (WY) expressed concern about funding for Medicaid expansion, which has been funded by state general funds in Wyoming.

**Announcements** –

Presented by Jeannie Campbell

Doyle inquired about the face masks that the National Council ordered. Jeannie stated that two million masks are expected to be shipped on April 26th. She also mentioned the second shipment of 300,000 masks will be sent around the same time. She noted that we are a little concerned about U.S. customs seizing masks shipped from China.

Jeannie also stated that typically, we would now be planning our spring meetings, and that while we are currently doing that, that we will be moving to virtual meetings. We plan on spreading the meetings out during the week of June 15th. We are still also planning a Hill Day and the Public Policy Institute on June 23rd with a virtual platform. Live speakers as well as breakout sessions will be featured. An updated agenda will be shared shortly.

Mark Fontaine asked about potentially moving Hill Day to the Fall. Jeannie replied that there is no guarantee we will have fall meetings. Paul Curtis said that they are planning their fall conference, but he is starting to believe that they may not be able to have that as well. Mark said they are still planning their meetings in late August and are not planning on pulling the plug for another 60 days. Annette Dubas (NB) said they have not pulled the plug yet on their upcoming meeting.

Mary Windecker (MT) asked about what others are doing proactively about members paying dues. Marvin Lindsay (IL) stated that they cut dues in half for the first quarter of their fiscal year. Mark Fontaine asked that if you lose 50% of your dues, and lose conference revenue, how do you fund your association? Mary said they need PPP loans to materialize to stay solvent.

John said they have opened the weekly briefing to anyone in the space and he has found their membership has since actually increased. He stated that they are looking to blend their conferences with both virtual and in-person aspects. John also stated he is asking his philanthropic partners to step up funding because we will be on the front lines of battling the next wave of trauma once pandemic is over.

Jeannie stated that 90% of NatCon20 registrants wanted full refunds and 10% asked to roll their registration over to next year. She said that this was the same for exhibitors. For sponsors, she said it was 50/50.

Ann Christian (WA) asked what we are thinking about in terms of National Council membership dues. Jeannie said that we would discuss this with the Membership Committee and the Board in June.

**Next Association Executives Teleconference**

April 28, 2020 2:00 PM ET