**National Council for Behavioral Health**

Association Executives Teleconference Summary Notes

Tuesday, July 6, 2021

2:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET

**Participants**: Kate Brace, Melanie Brown-Woofter, Blanca Campos, Shelly Chandler, Ann Christian, Le Ondra Clark Harvey, Lauri Cole, Terry Dosch, Candy Espino, Josh Evans, Mark Fontaine, Doyle Forrestal, Robyn Garrett, Moses Gur, Shannon Hall, Jesse Hambrick, Rusti Holwick, Heather Jefferis, Lee Johnson, Teresa Lampl, Mark Levota, John Magnusson, Maggie McCowen, Carolyn Petrak, Michelle Ponce, Mary-Linden Salter, Flora Schmidt, Barbara Scott, Andrea Smyth, Chris Stoner-Mertz, John Tassoni, Jr., Julie Tessler, Ellyn Wilbur, and Mary Windecker.

**Staff in Attendance**: Chuck Ingoglia, Jeannie Campbell, Neal Comstock, Rebecca Farley David, Stephanie Katz, Connor McKay, Joel Nepomuceno, Sarah Surgenor, Bini Taddesse, and Reyna Taylor.

**Summary Notes:**

COVID-19 Policy Related Efforts

Reyna Taylor

Reyna stated that both the House and the Senate are not now in session, but we are expecting an upcoming debate regarding the Biden administration’s infrastructure package and budget. She said that as it stands, more funds are allocated toward mental health and substance use treatment, and Congress is aiming toward a reconciliation bill being considered in late July. Reyna said we will pass along more information to Association Executives and our members as talks progress.

She also thanked Association Executives for the robust conversation that took place last week around the 10% set aside in the proposed budget regarding recovery services. Reyna stated that the discussion illustrated that Association Executives are not in total agreement about where the National Council should stand, but the chances of the set-aside being passed has decreased.

Workforce

Doyle Forrestal, Reyna Taylor

Doyle and Reyna led the Association Executives on a discussion around workforce shortages. Reyna shared with Association Executives legislation being introduced in Congress to combat workforce challenges, which mostly involve student loan repayment. Association Executives shared significant concerns around workforce including:

* Mental health and substance use treatment providers not having the ability to pay staff a livable wage and losing staff to other organizations and sectors that are able to pay significantly higher salaries.
* The increasing number of staff vacancies, with some treatment organizations having up to 30% vacancies.
* The perceived value of the workforce not being related to demand and many organizations are seeing immense turnover due to staff burnout.
* The population with the most acute risk (lower income) is being served by the least qualified due to lack of ability to pay a fair wage.
* The need to analyze and evaluate the complete workforce continuum from exposing students to a possible career path in mental health and substance use to retaining experienced staff.
* Reimbursement rates are too low to cover overhead expenses and to pay staff a living wage.

Hill Day 2021

Reyna Taylor

Reyna stated that the Public Policy Committee Meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 19th and a hybrid (in-person and virtual) reception will be held on the afternoon of the 19h. She also stated currently, the planned Hill Day on October 20th allows for only 5 individuals per office. She shared things can change in the months leading up to Hill Day 2021 and thanked Association Executives for being nimble as things change. She also shared the Association Executives Committee meeting will be held on Monday, October 18th.

Association Executives Retreat  
Jeannie Campbell

Jeannie shared with Association Executives that the Association Executives Retreat will occur during the 2nd or 3rd week of September (most likely September 13th and 14th) in Scottsdale, AZ. Jeannie shared that they are in the process of finalizing the resort and it should be resolved over the course of the next few days.

**Next Association Executives Teleconference**

The next Association Executives meeting will be on Tuesday, July 13, 2021, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. ET.