National Council for Behavioral Health

Association Executives Teleconference Summary Notes

Tuesday, September 8, 2020

2:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET

Participants: Laura Aldinger, Blanca Campos, Melanie Brown-Woofter, Danette Castle, Ann Christian, Lauri Cole, Lydia Conley, John Coppola, Lori Doyle, Josh Evans, Mark Fontaine, Doyle Forrestal, Lauren Grimes, Shannon Hall, Jesse Hambrick, Kelly Hansen, Lisa Henick, Kimberly Higgs, Kyle Kessler, Maryam Kiefer, Mark Levota, John Magnusson, Holly McCorkle, Brett McGinty, Shauna Moses, Jin Palen, Michelle Ponce, Mary-Linden Salter, Flora Schmidt, Malory Shaughnessy, Adrienne Shilton, Andrea Smyth, John Tassoni, Jr., and Mary Windecker.

Staff in Attendance: Chuck Ingoglia, Brett Beckerson,Neal Comstock,Rebecca Farley David,Stephanie Katz,Diane Millard,Joel Nepomuceno, Joe Parks,Michael Petruzzelli, Sarah Surgenor,and Reyna Taylor.

**Summary Notes:**

**Federal Legislative Update**

Reyna Taylor, Stephanie Katz, and Michael Petruzelli

Republican Ways & Means Committee Press Release - Stephanie Katz gave an overview of the recent Republican Ways & Means Committee press release which argued that due to the lack of use of federal relief funds, Congress should not make additional funds available to state and local governments until current funds are used. She also described how Ways & Means Committee Ranking Member Kevin Brady (R-TX) highlighted studies that have shown that states have only used 24% of federal funding, and he said that Republicans should not consider additional aid to state and local governments until all funds are spent. Stephanie stated that while the momentum for additional state and local government relief is at a standstill, there is still room for us to advocate for the $38.5B in *direct* additional funding for behavioral health providers.

Families First Coronavirus Response Act - Stephanie gave an update on the interpretation of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. She said that the Department of Labor’s (DOL) April definition of an excepted healthcare employee (for the purpose of treatment providers having to pay mandatory sick leave) was broad. Stephanie described how a court in New York has ruled the DOL’s definition excepted healthcare employee was overly vague and it developed a narrower list of what can be defined as a healthcare provider. Stephanie stated that Association Executives should consult independent legal advisors to ensure your organizations abide by appropriate rules.

House Energy & Commerce Committee Hearing - Michael Petruzelli gave an overview of the upcoming September 9 Committee hearing, in which they will review 38 bills, including: the Mental Health Access Improvement Act (which would allow marriage and family therapists to bill Medicare), reauthorization of the State Targeted Opium Response grants, the Mental Health in Schools Act (which would provide SAMHSA grants to schools for screening, treatment and outreach training), and legislation around school-based suicide prevention. Michael also stated that the National Council will be sending out a save the date for the 988 Hotline Day of Action, encouraging members to write to House members to pass the 988 Designation Act, which makes 988 a national mental health crisis hotline, in addition to securing funding for the program.

Lastly, Reyna said the Senate Republican’s COVID-19 relief legislation (“skinny bill”) will go to a vote on Thursday but that she does not believe Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) will have enough votes to pass it. She also reminded Association Executives that the Provider Relief Fund portal will be open until September 13 and that members who have not yet done so should apply.

**Announcements**

Doyle Forrestal said that Dr. Joe Parks will give a COVID-19 medical update during next week’s Association Executive’s meeting.

**Next Association Executives Teleconference**

September 15, 2020, 2:00 PM ET