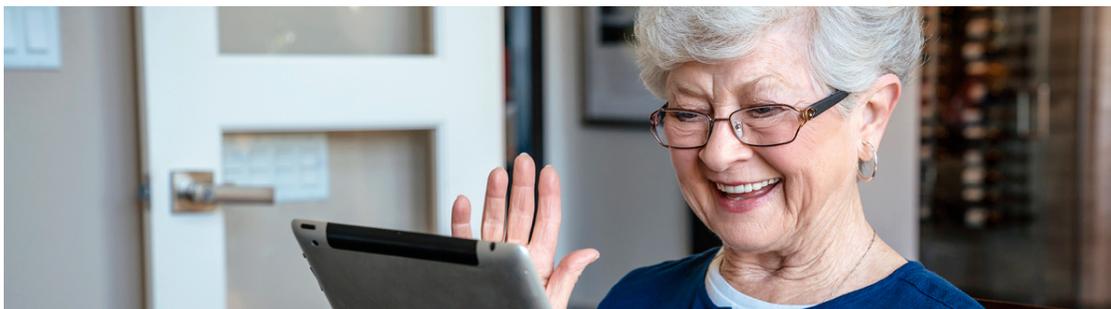


APA ADVOCACY

Washington Update

APA Advocacy Washington Update is a weekly newsletter that highlights how APA is working to advance the discipline and practice of psychology on Capitol Hill and beyond. Learn more about APA's [advocacy priorities](#) for 2020.

Ensuring Medicare Patients Have Access to Telehealth During COVID-19 Emergency



On March 6, President Trump signed into law the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2020 (H.R. 6074, Public Law 116-123), which provides \$8.3 billion in emergency funding, including a provision that allows the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) to waive Medicare telehealth restrictions during the coronavirus outbreak so that patients can receive care no matter where they are located, including at home.

House sponsors of the [CONNECT for Health Act](#), another bill that would waive telehealth reimbursement restrictions during national emergencies, sent a letter last week to HHS Secretary Alex Azar urging the expeditious waiver implementation and guidance, as did Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee.

On March 17, HHS waived key restrictions and issued public guidance on that waiver. Notably, the guidance allows Medicare patients to receive telehealth services in their homes and permits psychologists to provide services to both existing and new Medicare patients allowing for greater service delivery than what was enacted into law. Providers can use telephones for patient services as long as they are equipped with audio and video capabilities that enable two-way, real-time interactive communication. The Office of Civil Rights at HHS announced it would waive penalties for potential HIPAA violations during this public health emergency.

APA will be releasing more details on these waivers as soon as possible. In addition, APA will continue to advocate for increasing patient access to telehealth services at the federal and state level so that psychologists can provide essential mental health care.

APA applauds the House and Senate sponsors of the APA-supported CONNECT for Health Act—Sens. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Ben Cardin (D-Md.), John Thune (R-S.D.), Mark Warner (D-Va.) and Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.) and Reps. Mike Thompson (D-Calif.), Peter Welch (D-Vt.), David Schweikert (R-Ariz.) and Bill Johnson (R-Ohio) for securing elements of their telehealth bill in the coronavirus response package.

For more information, contact Laurel Stine, JD, at lstine@apa.org and Deborah Baker, JD, at dbaker@apa.org.

Rallying Congressional Support to Fully Fund Critical State Block Grant for Schools

This week, the U.S. House finalized a [letter](#) to Appropriations Committee leadership requesting that the Student Support and Academic Enrichment grant program, authorized under Title IV-A of the Every Student Succeeds Act, be fully funded in Fiscal Year 2021 at \$1.6 billion. The letter—signed by 128 members of the House—affirms the importance of these funds, which provide grants to school districts to support programs that promote safe and healthy schools, seek to ensure all students have access to a well-rounded education, and work to give schools the technology and teacher training they need to effectively personalize student learning. APA is actively engaged in the Title IV-A Coalition, which assisted in garnering support among members of Congress and advocates for full funding of the program.

For more information, contact Rosie Sheehan at rsheehan@apa.org.

Advocating for APA Priorities at the National Science Foundation and Department of Justice

This week, APA submitted [testimony](#) to the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies regarding funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. APA joined the broader scientific community, including the Coalition for National Science Funding, in urging Congress to provide at least a \$9 billion appropriation for the National Science Foundation (NSF) in FY 2021 to support basic psychological science research as well as innovative, interdisciplinary and cross-directorate initiatives. This includes NSF's 10 Big Ideas and its investments in Industries of the Future, such as artificial intelligence. Consistent with [APA's 2020 advocacy priorities](#), our funding requests for the Department of Justice reflected our commitment to reforming the criminal and juvenile justice systems, supporting those with mental illness within the justice system, meeting the needs of victims of violence, and ensuring that the best scientific evidence is both well-funded and marshalled to improve critical justice programs and policies.

For more information, contact Craig Fisher, PsyD, at cfisher@apa.org or Cynthia Whitney, MPA, at cmalley@apa.org.

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