



# AMHCA E-Newsletter: Coronavirus Edition: Number 2 May 8, 2020

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## Letter from AMHCA CEO

Dear AMHCA Members and Friends:

I hope you and your loved ones are all doing well during this difficult time. This communication will be the first of regular updates on how AMHCA is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic on behalf of the members.

I worked for associations during the aftermath of the 9-11 terrorist attacks in 2001, and during the Great Recession period in 2007-09.

Those were incredibly tough times for our country where both crises had significant economic and social impacts on many Americans.

I learned several important lessons on how organizations operate and manage during those periods and how to lead.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the economic and related stresses it is causing – and will likely cause into the future – will emphasize one key element once again: Associations play a key role in the life of their members as they provide stability and solid organizational structures to act and inform internally and externally about the profession's needs and challenges.

Stability means having a long-term vision, transparent structures, and the ability to adjust quickly to new situations. Our business model is to address the needs of the members and promote their interests. In this context of this terrible coronavirus outbreak, stability and reliability are significant strengths of AMHCA – and for that matter all associations. In times of uncertainty like now, structures and procedures allow us to be normally fully operational. Our virtual operation and the standard operating procedures we have in place have allowed us not to miss a beat during this period. And to prepare for times like this, you need to have the right team in place. We are fortunate to have such a team that is dedicated to addressing the needs of members – the Governing Board, Committees and Staff.

For example, one such structure we have is a strong committee infrastructure in place that can take on the Learning/Credentialing, Clinical, Ethical, Policy, Financial, and Chapter related aspects to provide value to the members and address challenges of the current pandemic, and charting strategic pathways going forward.

The AMHCA Staff is going the extra mile at this critical time to address the needs of the members. Melissa McShepard on providing membership services and activities and financial acumen, Whitney Meyerhoeffer on providing timely and credible information on COVID-19 through all of our communication platforms, Rebecca Gilson on providing new virtual events and programs on COVID-19 issues and other professional development content, and Gray Otis for coordinating several key projects and work of our committees and special task forces.

For AMHCA it is not just about stability, but reliability. Reliable information and trust are the ingredients to develop reputation, and allow for the long-term relationships we hope to establish with our members and strategic positioning as a profession and toward policy-makers and other stakeholders.

Those structures form the backbone of AMHCA but are carefully adapted to new situations like the one we find ourselves in today. Those structures provide the necessary continuity, but they also have to adapt to the fact that we live in a world of constant change like the COVID-19 outbreak.

What I also learned from past crises is the need for Adapting Structures. Adapting structures is more important than ever. That is where our Executive Board can oversee decision-making processes on behalf of the Board in times of crises and where speed of action is of essence.

I am very pleased that we have established several new platforms and forums where our members can find relevant information and exchange views and share content on best practices, tools, methods, and strategies to thrive in today's environment. I appreciate the full scope and advantages of our on-line discussion groups and communities and other communication vehicles. In a way we have set up informal "virtual support teams" "roundtables" and "cross-segment working groups" by the very nature of these platforms that have expertise in specific areas, and can be accessed by all members to provide problem-solving information and experience. These platforms will become even more valuable to exchange information not only on practice and advocacy initiatives, but on societal and economic developments we will need to anticipate over the coming months and years.

The platforms we have established over the last three years have created a strong sense of community. And especially at this time, we will continue to leverage new technologies in the digital meeting environment to bring timely, credible information to our members. Our job – and why we ultimately exist – is to create a strong sense of community, to inform, and to inspire. We will need to build more virtual spaces that are purpose-driven and can replicate aspects on information-sharing, behavioral health marketplace learning, and peer connections.

In order for AMHCA to respond quickly to the current situation and going forward where other unforeseen circumstances will likely occur, we should consider setting up additional ad-hoc working groups and task forces that have the ability to be more nimble, where nimbleness is a virtue and a priority.

To demonstrate that we do care about the health and welfare of our members and the clinical mental health counseling profession, we need to show we have the solid structures in place they expect, that we are reliable, and that we are nimble to reassess those structures and programs we offer. Moreover, estimating and calculating financial and organizational risks for AMHCA and its members will be critically important.

We are here for you and we have the structures in place to address your needs and promote your interests.

On the advocacy front we will work with policymakers and stakeholder groups to make sure to align the clinical mental health counseling profession with the current crisis and on-going threats. It is critically important during this time to pass legislation that will allow clinical mental health counselors to receive recognition under the Medicare program. Otherwise, we will have another crisis on our hands: Less access to care for Medicare beneficiaries with mental health conditions that we have already witnessed over the last 20 years, as we see the number of cases increase due to the pandemic.

Decision-makers will know that CMHCs are on the front-lines at all times as Primary Mental Health Providers. I believe due to this crisis, our overall health care system is going to dramatically change. What will the post-COVID-19 environment look like? AMHCA and the clinical mental health counseling profession will be there to help pave the way to a better health care system where mental well-being is a front and center.

I believe this crisis is an opportunity as a moment of service to take AMHCA and the members to new heights – and a foundational goal of associations to improve society. It is a moment to build long-lasting trust and promote our value proposition and provide extraordinary value to the members.

**A Look Ahead Near Term and Beyond -- Being the Go-to-Place**  
Of course these are uncertain times. Based on research, associations that stay active in the marketplace in bad times and during economic turmoil, are among the first to emerge when the economy improves – based on authorities from the Harvard Business Review, Fortune Magazine, and McGraw Hill Research.

According to experts, now is the time for AMHCA to redouble our efforts with messaging and offerings that support, enhance, and enable our members to meet the challenges that they are facing. It is a time to take advantage of our competitors disarray or silence by gaining share of mind and share of wallet.

It is the time to tell member prospects how AMHCA and its benefits and products can help them through these tough and uncertain times and help them when everything settles down – and it will. Homebound prospects still need to stay informed and still need education along with opportunities for engagement that AMHCA provides.

It will be incredibly important and essential that membership acquisition will be, and reinstatement programs go uninterrupted. In fact, special emphasis will be on ensuring our prospects (and current members) recognize that AMHCA is the go-to-source for information in the field.

And we will not forget to look at our non-dues revenue selling opportunities. We will make an effort to promote non-dues revenue generators such as certification programs, store merchandise, and on-line education offerings. Running "Spring Special" discounts and premiums will help drive traffic to our site.

We will do everything we can to engage prospects so when their budgets allow, they will remember us. We want to be first-in-line when the virus subsides and when things return to normalcy.

We will use this time to continue to look for collaborative opportunities with other professional associations.

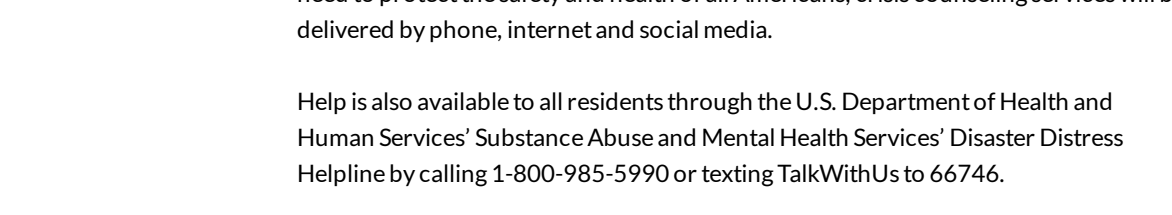
We will use this time to make the profession more strategically integrated in the health care system and AMHCA a stronger organization.

We will do everything possible to make AMHCA an essential part of our member's lives during this period and beyond.

Thank you for all you do for AMHCA, and on the front-lines during this critically important time for our nation!

Best,  
Joel E. Miller  
Executive Director and CEO  
American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA)

## Urgent Need for Grassroots this weekend to Include Counselors in Medicare



May 8, 2020  
The House is developing its next COVID-19 relief package and counselors are urged to contact your Representative in support of including our Medicare legislation (H.R. 945) in it. Congress will be working through the weekend to decide what is going into the House legislation so time is of the essence.

As previously reported, AMHCA is working closely with our allied organizations from counseling, MFT, and behavioral health clinics to add our language to the COVID-19 bill. Our sponsors, Representatives Thompson (D-CA) and Katko (R-NY), are fighting hard for inclusion, but we need grassroots advocacy to support the effort.

It is imperative that U.S. Representatives hear from counselor constituents about the importance of H.R. 945. We urge you to contact your Representative today and ask them to include our Medicare bill in the stimulus package.

Contact your Representative today! Use the link below to find your Representative, and phone numbers:

[Find my Representative](#)

Sample message for call or email [please fill in bracketed sections]:

*I am a mental health counselor from [city/state]. I urge Representative [Name] to include H.R. 945 in the COVID-19 relief bill currently under development. I urge legislation that includes mental health counselors to provide mental health and addiction services to Medicare beneficiaries. Research shows the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to create a behavioral health crisis and there are not enough mental health professionals to meet the needs of the Medicare population. I urge Rep. [Name] to increase the availability of behavioral health services by including H.R. 945 in the COVID-19 relief bill. Thank you for your consideration.*

Regards,  
David Bergman  
Principal  
Bergman Strategies, LLC

## Coronavirus News

76 Members of Congress Send Letter to Leadership Calling on Congress to Include \$38 Billion For Behavioral Health Organizations (BHOs) in Next Stimulus

Seventy-six lawmakers from both chambers of Congress are lobbying leadership to include funding for mental health in the next coronavirus stimulus package.

In a letter led by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), the lawmakers called for the next coronavirus stimulus to include at least \$38.5 billion for BHOs, which they say are at risk of being shuttered as part of the pandemic's economic fallout.

The lawmakers added that a "significant portion" of the funds should be allocated to BHOs that are "enrolled in Medicaid and provide care to underserved groups, or those who otherwise lack coverage for needed behavioral and mental health care."

The 76 members said BHOs have not been "sufficiently included" in past economic relief packages, which combined for a total of roughly \$33 billion, and noted that mental health services will be even more important as families grapple with the hardships related to the coronavirus.

FEMA Administrator Approves 30 States for Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program to Help Residents Struggling with COVID-Related Anxiety

On May 2, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced approval of 30 states and the District of Columbia for its Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training program. The program helps fund state-provided crisis counseling services to residents struggling with stress and anxiety as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The May 2 approvals were for: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin and D.C.

FEMA's Crisis Counseling program helps people and communities recover from the effects of natural or man-made disasters through short-term interventions that provide emotional support, crisis counseling, and connection to familial and community support systems. Due to the COVID-19 nationwide emergency and the need to protect the safety and health of all Americans, crisis counseling services will be delivered by phone, internet and social media.

Help is also available to all residents through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services' Disaster Distress Helpline by calling 1-800-985-5990 or texting TALKWITHUS to 66746.

Federal Communications Commission COVID-19 Telehealth Program

The COVID-19 Telehealth Program provides \$200 million in funding, appropriated by Congress as part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, to help health care providers provide connected care services to patients at their homes or mobile locations in response to the novel Coronavirus 2019 disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

The program will provide immediate support to eligible health care providers responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by fully funding their telecommunications services, information services, and device necessities to provide critical connected care services until the program's funds have been expended or the COVID-19 pandemic has ended.

Note that the COVID-19 Telehealth Program is limited to sort by nonprofit and public eligible health care providers that fall within the categories of health care providers in section 254(h)(7)(B) of the 1996 Act. For more information, see Question 10 of the sort by [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

New Survey Shows Majority of People Report Struggling with Mental Health Due to Covid-19

A small new survey from finance research and analysis website ValuePenguin finds that more than half of respondents are struggling with their mental health.

Here's more from the nearly 1,200-person survey:

Overall trends: 53% of those surveyed said their mental health is suffering due to the Covid-19 outbreak. This was especially the case with millennial respondents, nearly two-thirds of whom reported struggling with their mental health.

Loneliness: 47% of respondents said they're feeling more lonely than usual. Although half said they spoke to loved ones daily, around 10% of respondents said that video or phone chats exacerbated their feelings of isolation.

Resources: Nearly 60% said they don't know how to access mental health resources from home. More than 20% want to access a virtual therapist, but are unsure if insurance will cover the service.

Survey of Children in Wuhan, China Shows 1 in 5 Children Reporting Depressive Symptoms

A new study of children who were quarantined in the Chinese province of Hubei – whose capital is Wuhan – finds that more than a fifth of them reported symptoms consistent with depression.

Here's more:

The study: Researchers analyzed responses from more than 1,700 children in grades 2-6 in the cities of Wuhan and Huangshi. The children had been subject to home confinement due to the pandemic for at least two months.

The findings: Almost 23% of students reported depressive symptoms, while nearly 20% reported symptoms of anxiety. Those in Wuhan, the epicenter of the outbreak, were more likely to report these symptoms than children in Huangshi.

The implications: The lack of outdoor activities and social interactions may have influenced the rates of mental distress reported by the children, and a future research will have to consider the long-term mental health effects of restrictive measures, the authors suggest.

New "Well Being Trust" Report Shows Covid-19 Could Result in 75k 'Deaths of Despair'

According to a new report, the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic could result in as many as 75,000 "deaths of despair" – or those from suicide or alcohol and other substance abuse.

Unemployment is a risk factor for the Robert Graham Center and also researchers at the Well Being Trust and the Robert Graham Center looked at projected rates of unemployment for 2020-2029 and combined it with the number of deaths of despair from 2018 as a baseline.

Depending on how steep the unemployment figures could be, the projection for deaths of despair ranged from around 27,000 if the economy recovered quickly to more than 154,000 if the economic downturn lasted for a long time, with 75,000 deaths being the most likely scenario.

To avoid this, policymakers should focus on providing meaningful work to those who are unemployed as a result of Covid-19 – such as by employing them as contact tracers – and should make a successful mental health care easier, the report concludes.

Lancet Article: Suicide Risk Might Increase Because of Stigma Toward Individuals With COVID-19 and Their Families, While Depression, Anxiety, and Post-Traumatic Stress Might Increase Among The General Population

The mental health effects of the coronavirus disease pandemic might be profound and there are suggestions that suicide rates will rise, although this is not inevitable.

Success is likely to become a more pressing concern as the pandemic spreads and has longer-term effects on the general population, the economy, and vulnerable groups. Preventing suicide therefore needs urgent consideration.

The response must capitalize on, but extend beyond, general mental health policies and practices.

NEW YORK: New York Expanding Mental Health Services for Coronavirus Frontline Workers

New York is expanding its efforts to provide mental health services to frontline workers amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The services, which will be free of cost, are being offered in conjunction with Kate Spade New York Foundation and includes a 24/7 hotline available to workers.

In addition, Co-pays, deductibles and any other out-of-pocket costs for mental health services for frontline pandemic workers will be waived by state insurance regulators.

COLORADO: Mental Health and Financial Security are Two of the Top Concerns among Coloradans during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Healthier Colorado and The Colorado Health Foundation on Thursday released new results from a statewide survey about the coronavirus outbreak. The survey looks at the concerns, needs, experiences and attitudes of Coloradans as they navigate through this unprecedented time. Nearly half (43%) said they believed the worst was yet to come.

Here are some of the key findings from the survey: A majority of Coloradans say the stress and worry from the coronavirus outbreak has impacted their mental health.

More Coloradans are worried about paying for necessities of daily living like housing, food, utilities and prescription drugs. Coloradans overwhelmingly feel the government should do more to make health care more affordable, support individuals who cannot afford food and housing, and provide paid sick and family leave.

Most people feel there are significant changes ahead to the way we live, socialize and work, even after the coronavirus outbreak is under control. More than half of those surveyed, about 53%, reported that their mental health has worsened due to stress and anxiety over the pandemic.

Recent Media Articles on COVID-19 and Impact on Mental Health

USA Today: Death is our greeter: Doctors, nurses struggle with mental health as coronavirus cases grow

STAT News: Crisis counselors, the 'paramedics of mental health', wage a wrenching battle on the coronavirus front lines

The Washington Post: The coronavirus pandemic is shaking America into a mental-health crisis

The Washington Post: The Covid-19 pandemic is pushing the mental-health system out of complacency

Business Insider: The Mental Health Crisis for Frontline Workers Has Already Begun

EdWeek: Schools Struggle to Meet Students' Mounting Mental-Health Needs

USA Today: Cavaliers star Kevin Love shares mental health tips to help deal with coronavirus' impact

Members in the News

Guest opinion: Five essentials of total health integration during times of crisis - by Gray Otis and Sandi Williams, April 9, 2020

## Telehealth

Updates on States Offering Licensure Portability During COVID-19 Pandemic

One of the many factors complicating clinical mental health counseling work in the current COVID-19 situation is cross-jurisdictional licensure.

To help navigate these waters, please see a summary of licensure requirement changes for medical and behavioral health providers on a state-by-state basis, and please see the link to each state's COVID-19 resource page.

[http://theshrinkspace.blog/2020/04/29/telehealth-requirements-across-states-lives/?fbclid=IwAR2Mv98w6wQW4F\\_Cbn9A2sT2m-iP6lC64ThnAQ\\_NNUlRQ0IwlnZapTU0](http://theshrinkspace.blog/2020/04/29/telehealth-requirements-across-states-lives/?fbclid=IwAR2Mv98w6wQW4F_Cbn9A2sT2m-iP6lC64ThnAQ_NNUlRQ0IwlnZapTU0)

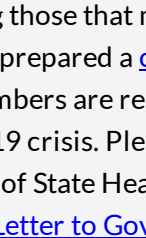
If you learn of changes in your state on portability and telehealth, please provide that information in a reply to [this thread](#) so we can have the most up-to-date information in one place.

## Education



May 18 - 20, 2020  
Telemental Health Preparedness Summit

Register



June 24-26, 2020  
2020 AMHCA Annual Conference Now Virtual

Register

## Advocacy

AMHCA Letters  
[AMHCA letter to AASCB with statement by the AMHCA Ethics Committee on "The Need for States to Offer Licensure Portability During the COVID-19 Pandemic"](#) (April 14, 2020)

[Letter to National Association of Insurance Companies requesting to temporarily lift restrictions on telebehavioral health by phone or video regardless of insurance plan and ensure payment parity.](#) (March 31, 2020)

[AMHCA letter to Congress explaining that we are ready to provide substance use guidance, special enrollment periods on healthcare.gov, and discretionary and block funds.](#) (March 20, 2020)

[AMHCA letter to health insurance associations urging the utilization of telehealth and a telebehavioral health by phone or video regardless of insurance plan and access to care during the pandemic.](#) (March 18, 2020)

[AMHCA letter to US Vice President and US Department of Health and Human Services urging them to take steps to address the mental health consequences of the pandemic including close attention to vulnerable populations, Medicare recognition and increased telehealth resources.](#) (March 11, 2020)

Summaries of Legislation  
[Summary of Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act.](#) (March 3, 2020)  
[Summary of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act \(April 20, 2020\)](#)

For Chapter Leaders  
Letter to Governors  
Many governors/state officials are asking qualified health, mental health, and related professionals to supplement their health care capacity on a temporary basis to treat seriously ill coronavirus patients including those that may need to be intubated.

We have prepared a [communication that you can edit](#) as you wish that informs your Governor that your members are ready to volunteer to address the needs of the citizens of your state during the COVID-19 crisis. Please use the communication to inform other officials as well such as the Director of State Health Departments and other key officials.

[General Letter to Governors](#)  
[General Addresses](#)

Support for Fellow Professional Association Leaders  
To express support for your fellow professional association leaders in your state, we have prepared a communication that you can send (edit as you wish) to those contacts, highlighting that your state chapter is ready to help address the professional association's mental health needs of their members during this health care crisis, and offer personal support. If you wish, please use the links below that contain contact information at state hospital associations, state medical societies, state nurse associations, state mental health program directors, state associations of police officers, and state associations of firefighters.

Fellow Professional Associations  
<https://www.healthbuideusa.org/state-hospital-associations.htm>  
<https://physiciansfoundation.org/medical-societies-and-associations/>  
<https://www.nursingworld.org/membership/find-nv-state/>  
<https://www.nasmbd.org/content/mental-health-links>  
<https://www.nvca.org/states/>  
<http://www.napo.org/about/related-sites-organizations/>

## AMHCA Resources

Latest Shared Resources

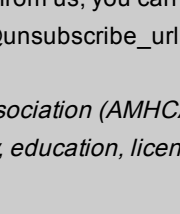
- Covid SSRI Screening List Tool
- State-by-State Telehealth Guide
- Sample Informed-Consent Telehealth Form

More

Latest Discussion Threads

- Urgent Need for Grassroots this weekend to Include Counselors in Medicare
- Factsheet Resource on Telehealth and Privacy
- Sample Informed-Consent Telehealth Form

More



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To ensure that future mailings are sent to your inbox, please add info@amhca.org to your contact list.  
This email was sent to @email@ from American Mental Health Counselors Association.  
If you wish to stop receiving email from us, you can simply remove yourself by visiting: @unsubscribe\_url@

The American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) works to enhance the profession of mental health counseling through advocacy, education, licensure, and professional development.