



## AMHCA E-Newsletter: Coronavirus Edition: Number 1 April 24, 2020

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## Letter from AMHCA CEO

Dear AMHCA Members and Friends:

I hope you and your love 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 Gibson 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 able 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, renewal, 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  
Joel E. Miller  
Executive Director and CEO  
American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA)

## Act Today to Include Counselors in Medicare



On April 21, the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) released a report recommending mental health counselors be added to the list of Medicare providers. The timing couldn't be better as AMHCA ramps up efforts to motivate counselors to contact your legislators in support of including our Medicare legislation ([H.R. 945/S. 286](#)) in future COVID-19 relief legislation.

The BPC is a well-respected bipartisan think tank comprised of former senior policymakers. The report, "[Confronting Rural America's Health Care Crisis](#)", was prepared by the Rural Health Task Force, led by former Senate Majority Leaders Tom Daschle and Bill Frist, M.D. The report provides bipartisan policy recommendations to stabilize and transform rural health infrastructure, promote the uptake of value-based and virtual care, and ensure access to local providers. Adding licensed mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists to the list of Medicare-covered providers was a key recommendation for ensuring an adequate rural health care workforce.

The BPC highlighted how the report's policy recommendations offer solutions to the challenges raised by the COVID-19 pandemic. This link parallels AMHCA's efforts to include our Medicare legislation in future COVID-19 stimulus legislation. AMHCA is working closely with our allied organizations from counseling, MFT, and behavioral health clinics to add our language to the next COVID bill. We have received some interest from congressional offices, but have much work to do.

To be successful, we need your help! It is imperative that U.S. Representatives and Senators help from counselor constituents about the importance of H.R. 945 and S. 286. **We urge you to contact your legislators today and ask them to include our Medicare bills in the next COVID-19 package.**

Contact your Representative and Senator today! Use the links below to find your federal legislators with email and phone numbers:  
[Find my Representative](#)  
[Find my Senator](#) (top left corner)

Sample message for call or email [fill in bracketed section providing separate messages to Representative and Senators]:  
*I am a mental health counselor from [city/state]. I urge [Rep. \_\_\_\_ / Sen. \_\_\_\_] to include [H.R. 945/S. 286] in the next COVID-19 relief bill. This legislation authorizes licensed 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. \_\_\_\_ / Sen. \_\_\_\_] to increase the availability of behavioral health services by including [H.R. 945/S. 286] in the next COVID-19 relief bill. Thank you for your consideration.*

Regards,  
David Bergman  
Principal  
Bergman Strategies, LLC

## Coronavirus News

- [National and International Resources](#)
- [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/covid-19-teletherapy-across-state-lines/?fbclid=IwAR2Mv98w6wQW4F\\_Cbp9Azz22M-iP6iC6LhWAO\\_NNURbO1wainZqTU0](http://theshrinkspace.blog/covid-19-teletherapy-across-state-lines/?fbclid=IwAR2Mv98w6wQW4F_Cbp9Azz22M-iP6iC6LhWAO_NNURbO1wainZqTU0)

If you learn of a change in your state on portability and telemental and telebehavioral health information in a reply to [this thread](#) so we can have the most up-to-date information in one place.

## Education



Apr 29, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (ET)  
Webinar: [Bipartisan First Aid During COVID-19](#)  
Co-sponsored with NAADAC

[Register](#)



May 18 - 20, 2020  
Telemental Health Preparedness Summit

[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 assist, we work in integrated care and telehealth settings and urging them to pass our bills, 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 in insurance plans to address gaps 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](#)

[Governor 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 general 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.healthguideusa.org/state\\_hospital\\_associations.htm](https://www.healthguideusa.org/state_hospital_associations.htm)
- <https://physicsfoundation.org/medical-societies-and-associations/>
- <https://www.nursingworld.org/membership/nfm-ny-state/>
- <https://www.nasmhd.org/content/mental-health-links>
- <https://www.nvfc.org/states/>
- <http://www.napo.org/about/related-sites-organizations/>

## AMHCA Resources

### Latest Shared Resources

- Update on Mental Health Access Improvement Act
- State-by-State Telehealth Guide
- Sample Informed-Consent Telehealth Form

[More](#)

### Latest Discussion Threads

- Update on Mental Health Access Improvement Act
- State-by-State Telehealth Guide
- Sample Informed-Consent Telehealth Form

[More](#)



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107 S. West Street, Suite 779, Alexandria, VA, 22314

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This email was sent to '@@' 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.