



Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness

Monthly Policy Committee Meeting
September 2023

Agenda

- Welcome
- Policy and Legislative Updates
- Hill Engagement re: National Strategy for Social Connection Act
- CESIL Policy Committee Member Updates
- Closing & Next Steps

Biden Administration Releases Proposed Rule on Strengthening Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act Requirements

- The Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Treasury (the Departments) [announced](#) a proposed rule that implements new requirements related to health plan compliance and enforcement of the 2008 Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA)
- The rule proposes several changes, like requiring self-funded, non-Federal government plans to adhere to MHPAEA, as well as increasing access to mental health benefits by not allowing issuers to use more restrictive prior authorization.
- The rule would provide clarification of MHPAEA's requirement that individuals have access to their mental health and substance use disorder benefits in parity with medical and surgical benefits.

Biden Administration Awards More Than \$88 Million in Grants that Safeguard Youth Mental Health and Expand Access to Treatment for Substance Use Disorders

- The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) awarded over \$88 million towards various grant programs aimed at bolstering the nation's behavioral health.
- These awards coincide with the nation's ongoing mental health crisis and overdose epidemic – which includes youth mental health challenges. Key initiatives include a \$42.2 million grant for Project Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education (Project AWARE).

SAMHSA Publishes Three-Year Strategic Plan to Combat Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Crisis

- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [recently published](#) its three-year Strategic Plan to combat the ongoing mental health and substance use crisis in the United States.
- The Strategic Plan emphasizes four guiding principles; equity, trauma-informed approaches, a commitment to data and evidence, and recovery.
- These guiding principles focus on five key areas including preventing substance use and overdose, enhancing access to suicide prevention and mental health services, promoting resilience and emotional health for families, integrating behavioral and physical healthcare, and strengthening the behavioral health workforce.

SAMHSA Announces Funding to Enhance Mental Health Services and Awareness Training

- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), [announced](#) over \$64 million in funding to address the national mental health crisis.
- A major portion of the funding, approximately \$59.4 million, is being allocated to states and territories via the [Community Mental Health Services Block Grant program](#), which is part of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.
- The intention is to build a robust public mental health system that can offer support during crises and long-term recovery, with the goal of enhancing the capacity for people to access vital mental health services and support.

Legislative Updates: Ways and Means RFI on Improving Access to Health Care in Rural and Underserved Areas

- The House Ways and Means Committee announced a RFI seeking stakeholder input on addressing chronic disparities in access to health care in rural and underserved communities due October 5, 2023.
- The Committee is hoping to address issues related to healthcare facility closures, longer travel distances, and wait times as they are impacting patients nationwide due to a shrinking healthcare workforce, consolidation, and inconsistent financing; challenges which are particularly severe for those in rural and underserved areas.
- The Coalition is planning on providing comments and recommendations related to investing in social services and supports; innovative state initiatives and Medicaid waivers; expanding behavioral health coverage and reimbursement; the importance of telehealth and remote communication technologies; affordable access to technology; and digital literacy and evaluation strategies

**Hill Engagement:
National Strategy for
Social Connection Act**