



CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR  
Marriage & Family Therapy



Connecticut  
Council of  
Child and  
Adolescent  
Psychiatry, Inc.



June 22, 2020

The Honorable Joe Aresimowicz  
Speaker of the House of Representatives

The Honorable Matt Ritter  
House Majority Leader

The Honorable Themis Klarides  
House Minority Leader

The Honorable Martin Looney  
Senate President Pro Tempore

The Honorable Bob Duff  
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Len Fasano  
Senate Minority Leader

Connecticut General Assembly  
Legislative Office Building  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

***Sent via Email***

Dear Speaker Aresimowicz, Majority Leader Ritter, Minority Leader Klarides, Senate President Looney, Majority Leader Duff and Minority Leader Fasano:

As the state's mental health care provider community, we are writing to request that you pass legislation to codify the tele-health provisions implemented in the Governor's Executive Orders for behavioral health care in the wake of the public health crisis with the emergence of the COVID-19 virus.

The virus and the declaration of the public health emergency by Governor Lamont has greatly altered the state's mental health care system. As you consider policies to implement in statute when you convene a special session, **we ask that you codify the use of tele-health for behavioral health in the public and private insurance markets** included in the Governor's Executive Orders 7G, 7F, 7DD. We request **payment parity** for tele-health visits at the same rate if the services were delivered in-person. We also request that you specifically **include the telephonic-only provision within covered behavioral health tele-health services.**

Tele-health has become a very important tool for mental health providers during the declared public health emergency. It has been used to continue to provide access to care for patients and engage new patients who have not received care in the past, many of which are new enrollees to the Medicaid program. ***In particular, the telephonic-only tele-health provision has been critical to many patients in the Medicaid population who do not possess the technology for a video encounter but who need access to behavioral health services.*** Tele-health is an important tool that should be extended as we anticipate an increase enrollment in the Husky program as a result of the economic crisis caused by the crisis and stay at home order.

We anticipate a tsunami wave of Connecticut residents who will need to access behavioral health services in the wake of the public health crisis. These individuals include health care providers and workers who have been caring for COVID-19 positive patients, individuals diagnosed with the disease and their family members as well as family members who have lost a loved-one from the disease. We have also seen an increased need from existing patients who have experience heightened anxiety and other symptoms of their disease as a result of living through this crisis.

Mental health providers are needed now more than ever. Yet the public health emergency and stay at home order have devastated many of our members who are small business owners. Prior to the Executive Orders providing coverage for tele-health services our members saw a dramatic drop in revenue because of cancelled or missed appointments. Telehealth is an important tool for our patients and our livelihoods as the mental health care delivery system adapts to the public health crisis.

In addition to expanding the use of tele-health including the telephonic-only provision as a covered service **in the private insurance market with payment parity, we ask that you allow mental health providers to use any HIPAA compliant platform.** During this crisis we have experienced some insurance carriers requiring the use of a specific platform when seeking reimbursement for services. Many of our members had already invested in various HIPAA compliant platforms and our patient

population is as diverse as their insurance coverage and carrier. Requiring providers to use a carrier-specific platform places an undue burden on our members.

Thank you for your time and attention to these important matters. We urge you to: pass legislation that would allow tele-health to be a covered behavioral health service under the State's Medicaid program and private insurance; include telephonic-only tele-health as a covered behavioral health service; require payment parity for mental health providers and allow the use of any HIPAA compliant platform by mental health providers in Connecticut.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Ruitto, LMFT, CTAMFT  
Chair  
Connecticut Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

Jessica Nelson, PhD, LMFT  
Advocacy Chair  
Connecticut Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

Julie Yale  
President  
Connecticut Counseling Association

Karla Troesser  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Counseling Association

Paul Rao, MD  
President  
Connecticut Council of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

Jacqueline Coleman  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Psychiatric Association

Anne Klee, PhD.  
President  
Connecticut Psychological Association

Marcy Kane, PhD.  
Legislative Chair  
Connecticut Psychological Association

Stephen A. Wanczyk-Karp  
Executive Director  
National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut Chapter

Cc: Representative Cathy Abercrombie, House Chair, Human Services Committee  
Senator Marilyn Moore, Senate Chair, Human Services Committee  
Representative Jay Case, Ranking Member, Human Services Committee  
Senator George Logan, Ranking Member, Human Services Committee  
Representative Jonathan Steinberg, House Chair, Public Health Committee  
Senator Mary Daugherty Abrams, Senate Chair, Public Health Committee  
Representative Bill Petit, Ranking Member, Public Health Committee  
Senator Heather Somers, Ranking Member, Public Health Committee  
Representative Sean Scanlon, House Chair, Insurance Committee  
Senator Matt Lesser, Senate Chair, Insurance Committee  
Representative Cara Christine Pavalock-D'Amato, Ranking Member, Insurance Committee  
Senator Kevin Kelly, Ranking Member, Insurance Committee  
Governor Ned Lamont  
Deidre Gifford, MD, MPH, Commissioner, Department of Social Services, Acting Commissioner, Department of Public Health  
Andrew Mais, Commissioner, Department of Insurance  
Mathew Brokman, Office of the Speaker of the House  
Franklin Perry, Office of the House Majority Leader  
Ricky Baltimore, Office of the House Majority Leader  
Jennifer Sienna, Office of the House Minority Leader  
Vinnie Mauro, Office of the Senate President  
Courtney Cullinan, Office of the Senate President  
Chris Fletcher, Office of the Senate Minority Leader