



FAL Briefing Memo

July 2020

TELEHEALTH:

- APTA submitted comments to the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee (HELP) for its hearing held on June 17 titled “Telehealth: Lessons From the COVID-19 Pandemic.” APTA’s comments focused primarily on the need for Congress to implement a permanent telehealth policy for therapy.
- APTA also joined with dozens of provider and patient groups on a June 29, 2020 sign-on letter to Congressional leadership on the need for making the current telehealth policies permanent.
- APTA submitted feedback to the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee (HELP) in response to their request for input on the committee’s white paper “Preparing for the Next Pandemic.” APTA’s comments were focused primarily on implementing a permanent telehealth policy for therapy, and support of section 4.2 of the white paper, which states that telehealth became an option for many patients and health care providers alike where it was not before, reducing the number of patients in clinics and emergency departments.

HHS PROVIDER RELIEF FUND: The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) recently released a fact sheet providing a high level summary of the \$15 billion available from the Provider Relief Fund to Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) providers. HRSA indicates that the payment to each provider “will be approximately 2 percent of reported gross revenue from patient care,” while clarifying that “the final amount each provider receives will be determined after the data is submitted.” The fact sheet provides information on the application process, eligibility, the use of funds, attestation requirements, and other issues. The deadline to apply for the Medicaid distribution is July 20, 2020. For more information, visit: <https://www.hhs.gov/coronavirus/cares-act-provider-relief-fund/index.html>.

IDEA: APTA, in collaboration with AOTA, ASHA, and ITCA, is circulating a Dear Colleague Letter on Capitol Hill in response to the need for specific consideration of increased funding for the two early childhood services programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). APTA will send an action alert to Academy of Pediatric PT members to also contact their House members

OFFICE of SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS: Cindy Miles, Academy of Pediatric Physical Therapy President, represented APTA during a live webinar and Q&A hosted by the Dept. of Education Office of Special Education Programs on June 29, 2020. APTA will be submitting recommendations to OSEP in the next couple of weeks outlining the guidance we would like to see OSEP issue for providers of related services furnishing care in Fall 2020.

HIGHER EDUCATION: APTA joined with the Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP) to issue a statement and letters to Congressional leadership and the Administration opposing new guidance released by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) that prohibits international students from returning to or remaining in the United States if the institutions they attend adopt online-only instruction models amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The new policy modifications outlined by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), requiring nonimmigrant F-1 and M-1 visa holders to leave the United States or transfer schools if their institution moves to fully online operations as a result of COVID-19.

TRICARE LOW BACK PAIN DEMONSTRATION: On June 29, 2020, the Defense Health Agency announced a demonstration to waive cost sharing for up to 3 physical therapy visits for TRICARE beneficiaries with low

back pain. This demonstration project will be effective January 1, 2021, through December 31, 2023. The purpose of the demonstration is to encourage the uptake of PT services for the treatment and management of low back pain and to incentivize beneficiaries towards higher-value care and away from lower-value care. This demonstration will operate in 10 states, test whether waiving cost-sharing increases the uptake of PT services among patients with LBP, and measure the impact of LBP on lower-value services such as imaging, opioids, and surgery. APTA published a [news story](#) summarizing the announcement by the Defense Health Agency.

APTA COMMENT LETTERS:

- Taskforce on Telehealth Policy in response to its request for feedback.
- HHS Secretary Azar, urging him to extend the Public Health Emergency.
- HHS Secretary Azar and CMS Administrator Verma from both APTA and PPS, urging HHS to promote permanent adoption of telehealth policies, eliminate POC certification requirement, allow general supervision of PTAs in private practice, allow PTAs to perform maintenance therapy under Part B, and address the potential 8% cut in 2021.
- CMS on the FY 2021 IPPS/LTCH proposed rule.
- Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee for its hearing held on June 17 titled “Telehealth: Lessons From the COVID-19 Pandemic.”
- APTA submitted feedback to the Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee (HELP) in response to their request for input on committee on the committee’s white paper “Preparing for the Next Pandemic.”

APTA NOMINATIONS:

- Recommended by the Academy of Physical Therapy Research, APTA nominated Dr. Deborah Backus to serve on the AHRQ National Advisory Council for Healthcare Research and Quality.