Telehealth Beyond COVID-19: Action Steps for Social Workers

Like many of you, NASW-NJ is very concerned about the future of telemental health coverage and payment parity as the state of New Jersey continues its phased reopening. As we continue our advocacy on the local, state, and national level regarding this issue, here are action steps you can take to further our efforts and ensure continued access to telemental health services.

**ACTION STEPS:**

1. **Contact the NJ Department of Banking & Insurance to extend Bulletin No. 20-07.**

   **INFO:** On 3/22/20, DOBI mandated that health insurance companies update their policies to extend telehealth service coverage and guarantee payment parity without cost sharing. This bulletin is to remain in effect for the duration of the state of emergency, which currently ends on **July 4, 2020**.

   **ACTION:** Social workers can contact Marlene Caride, DOBI Commissioner, and request DOBI extend Bulletin No. 20-07 until 180 days past the end of NJ’s state of emergency.

   **CONTACT:** Call 609-292-7272 or E-mail to marlene.caride@dobi.nj.gov and lifehealth@dobi.nj.gov.

2. **Contact your local legislators in support of Bill A4200 and Bill A4215 and extended telehealth coverage. Be sure to tell them the provisions of these bills need to last AT LEAST 180 DAYS after the end of the state of emergency.**

   **INFO:** Bill A4200 revises NJ’s current telemedicine and telehealth law, P.L.2017, c.117 (C.45:1-1 et al.), to require payment parity for reimbursement rates for services provided in-person or via telehealth. A4215 extends the duration of several other laws pertaining to the use of telemedicine and telehealth in relation to COVID-19 pandemic

   **ACTION:** Social workers can contact their district representatives to ask legislators to support these bills, as well as additional measures that protect 1) coverage for audio only telehealth services, 2) non-restrictive requirements for credentialed providers to also become credentialed telehealth providers in order to maintain continuity of care.

   **CONTACT:** Use this link to find your local representative to ask them to support this bill: https://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/

3. **Encourage your clients to call their employers/insurance company and request coverage of telehealth services.**

   **INFO:** Many insurance companies are announcing “cut-off” dates for telehealth coverage or have not extended any coverage during this state of emergency. Though we encourage social workers to contact insurance companies they’re paneled with to determine the possibility of maintaining coverage for telehealth, ultimately, employer funded health plans and health insurance providers are more likely to listen to their consumers than their providers.

   **ACTION:** Have a conversation with your clients whose insurance plans will no longer cover telehealth services about your ability to continue seeing them virtually past the “cut-off” date. Encourage them to reach out to their employer’s benefits representative, human resource department, or to contact their insurance company directly to inquire about telehealth coverage and/or what needs to be done for services to continue to be covered.

4. **Educate yourself on best practices for possibly reopening and resuming in-person services.**

   In the event you chose to return to your office or partially reopen for in-person services, visit NASW-NJ’s COVID-19 FAQ & Resources page for practice guidelines, a sample in-person informed consent, and the most up-to-date information. Additional information can be found on the National NASW COVID-19 Resources page.

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