

**FROM KATHERINE B. MCGUIRE, APA CHIEF ADVOCACY OFFICER**

For the Week of February 3–7, 2020

- **Advising Congress on the Mental Health Issues Associated with Climate Change**
- **Speaking Out Against Medicare’s Proposed Cuts in Reimbursement**
- **Raising Awareness About Pediatric Mental Health**
- **Supporting Medicare Coverage of Services for Eating Disorders**

**Advising Congress on the Mental Health Issues Associated with Climate Change**

In a Feb. 4 [letter](#) to the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, APA highlighted a range of mental health issues associated with climate change including stress, depression and anxiety; strain on social and community relationships; links to increases in aggression, violence and crime; and the disproportionate impact climate change has on those living in under-resourced communities. The letter also indicated that people’s psychological responses to climate change—such as conflict avoidance, fatalism, fear, helplessness and resignation—are growing, and are adversely impacting psychological resiliency and engagement in activities and policies to address the causes of climate change. The letter referenced the 2017 report “[Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance](#),” published by APA in partnership with ecoAmerica. Rep. Kathy Castor (D-Fla.) included the letter into the congressional record.

*For more information, contact Geoff Mumford, PhD, at [gmumford@apa.org](mailto:gmumford@apa.org).*

**Speaking Out Against Medicare’s Proposed Cuts in Reimbursement**

APA, along with several other health professional organizations, was a driving force behind a letter from 99 members of the U.S. House of Representatives urging the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) to disclose its methodology for proposing cuts to Medicare reimbursement in 2021. In the 2020 proposed Medicare Physician Fee Schedule, CMS increased the value of evaluation and management codes. To compensate for these increases, CMS decreased reimbursement for several providers, including psychologists. Under the current proposal, psychologists will see a 7% reduction in reimbursement for Medicare services starting in 2021. The letter is part of a concerted advocacy campaign to prevent these cuts next year.

*For more information, contact Doug Walter, JD, at [dwalter@apa.org](mailto:dwalter@apa.org).*

## **Raising Awareness About Pediatric Mental Health**

Mental health experts and providers from across the country discussed ways to address the crisis in pediatric mental health care at a Capitol Hill briefing sponsored by Rep. Katie Porter (D-Calif.). Alfie Breland-Noble, PhD, a member of the group that developed the Congressional Black Caucus [taskforce report](#) on black youth suicide and mental health, discussed the report's recommendations and called for congressional support of the Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act of 2019 (H.R. 5469). APA sent its letter of support to the bill's sponsor this week.

*For more information, contact Leo Rennie, MPA, at [lrennie@apa.org](mailto:lrennie@apa.org).*

## **Supporting Medicare Coverage of Services for Eating Disorders**

APA joined in support for the bipartisan, bicameral Nutrition Counseling Aiding Recovery for Eating Disorders Act (S. 2907, H.R. 3711), sponsored by congresswoman and psychologist Rep. Judy Chu (D-Calif.) and Rep. Jackie Walorski (R-Ind.) and Sens. Maggie Hassan (D-N.H.) and Lisa Murkowski (R-Ark.). Also known as the Nutrition CARE Act, the bill would extend Medicare Part B coverage for Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT) services for individuals with eating disorders, permitting physicians, psychologists and other Medicare mental health professionals to refer MNT services to registered dietitians. The bill's sponsors recognize that eating disorders are caused by a complex interaction of genetic, biological, social, behavioral and psychological factors, and seek to help ensure seniors and persons with disabilities can receive MNT services as an important component of a comprehensive treatment plan for eating disorders. Eating disorders can be successfully treated with appropriate interventions, yet only one-third of people with eating disorders receive any care.

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