

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

For the Week of September 16, 2019

**In this issue:**

- **CRITICAL ALERT: ACT NOW TO PROTECT PSYCHOLOGISTS' REIMBURSEMENT**
- Advocating for NIH Funding
- Fighting for Psychologists' Concerns on Loan Forgiveness
- Partnering for Veteran Suicide Prevention
- Opposing a Rule That Would Take Food Away from Americans in Need

**CRITICAL ALERT: ACT NOW TO PROTECT PSYCHOLOGISTS' REIMBURSEMENT**

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has proposed a devastating 7% reimbursement cut for all psychological services through Medicare in 2021, which could force psychologists to leave Medicare and significantly undermine patient care. We need to get every psychologist, psychology student and organization to tell CMS they oppose this cut by next Friday, Sept.

27. Submit your comments on this 2020 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Proposed Rule [here](#) by clicking on the "Comment Now!" box at the top right corner of the page. In under two minutes, you will have done your part to protect patient care. Psychologists who may not have the time to write a unique comment can cut and paste the generic comments or personalize comments that APA has drafted (see below).

**Advocating for NIH Funding**

APA participated in the 2019 [Rally for Medical Research](#) on Capitol Hill this week to advocate for robust, sustained and predictable NIH funding. More than 200 scientists, advocates, practitioners and patients converged on Capitol Hill to ask their representatives to increase NIH funding by at least \$2.5 billion in fiscal year 2020. Representing APA was Dr. William W. Stoops of the University of Kentucky, who met with staff of the offices of Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and Rep. Andy Barr (R-Ky.). Dr. Stoops highlighted the value of psychological science, including his NIH-funded work on substance use disorders, which couldn't continue without such support. The previous night, Dr. Stoops attended a reception on Capitol Hill for rally participants, where he had the chance to meet NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins and thank him for NIH's support. *For more information, contact Craig Fisher, PsyD, at [cfisher@apa.org](mailto:cfisher@apa.org).*

**Fighting for Psychologists' Concerns on Loan Forgiveness**

Dr. Roseann Fish Getchell shared the challenges she faced with the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program at a roundtable hosted by Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-Ore.) who was preparing for a Sept. 19 House Education and Labor Higher Education Subcommittee oversight [hearing](#) on PSLF and the Temporary Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness (TE-PSLF) program. The hearing comes after a Government Accountability Office [report](#) found that 99% of TE-PSLF applications had been denied. During the hearing, Rep. Bonamici specifically [mentioned](#) the negative impact on psychologists. APA supports both programs, which provide loan forgiveness to those who commit themselves to a career in public service, thus improving access to mental health services.

*For more information, contact Kenneth Polishchuk at [kpolishchuk@apa.org](mailto:kpolishchuk@apa.org).*

**Partnering for Veteran Suicide Prevention**

The American Legion, a veterans service organization with nearly two million members, invited APA's director of military and veterans health policy to moderate its premiere event for Suicide Prevention Month. Speakers on the panel, who discussed strategies for veteran suicide prevention, included the acting national director of suicide prevention from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), a VA outreach specialist, an Army chief warrant officer and suicide attempt survivor, and

parents who lost their son to suicide following his separation from the military. In just one week, the presentation on the American Legion's Facebook page has garnered over 3,200 views. Watch it [here](#). APA works closely with military and veterans organizations and other key stakeholders to advocate for expanded research, evidence-based prevention and intervention programs, and support for those in the military and veterans community at higher risk for mental health challenges and suicide.

For more information, contact Heather O'Beirne Kelly, PhD, at [hkelly@apa.org](mailto:hkelly@apa.org).

### **Opposing a Rule That Would Take Food Away from Americans in Need**

APA President Dr. Rosie Phillips Davis, her Deep Poverty Workgroup and APA's advocacy team developed an advocacy action template for psychologists to use to submit comments on a [proposed rule](#) for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that would increase food insecurity for 3 million Americans, including children. To submit a comment opposing the rule that limits access to food and nutrition for those most in need, please use the template and follow these [instructions](#).

For more information, contact Aaron Bishop at [abishop@apa.org](mailto:abishop@apa.org).

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### **Two Draft Sample Letters for Psychologist to Comment on the Proposed Reimbursement Cut**

*Psychologists who may not have the time write unique comments can cut and paste the generic comments or personalize comments that APA has drafted here.*

#### **\*\* CUT AND PASTE GENERIC COMMENT FOR PRACTITIONERS**

As a psychologist who provides clinical services to patients, I am writing to comment on the CMS proposed Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for 2020, and its effect on both psychologists like me and on my patients.

I understand that psychologists are facing a 7% payment decrease in 2021 so that higher payments can be made for E/M services. This would be a devastating loss, because as you know, psychologists have already faced more than a decade of reimbursement cuts for their services. Most importantly, this additional decrease comes at a time when psychological services play a critical role in the lives of America's senior citizens, as our elderly population continues to grow.

At the same time, I am very pleased to see that psychologists who provide Health Behavior Assessment and Intervention (H&B) services will see increases due to a new coding structure and higher values in 2020. Physical health conditions are taking a heavy toll on Medicare beneficiaries, and we know from research that increasing access to psychological and behavioral health services will improve patient outcomes and reduce overall spending.

In the strongest terms possible, I urge you to (a) exclude psychologists from the 7% payment reduction in 2021, and (b) adopt the proposed revisions and value increases for the H&B codes. Thank you for considering my views on these issues.

Sincerely,  
Dr. XXXX

#### **PERSONALIZED COMMENT FOR PRACTITIONERS**

As a psychologist who provides clinical services to patients, I am writing to comment on the CMS proposed Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for 2020, and its effect on both psychologists like me and on my patients. **[Include short description of your practice with Medicare patients, such as "I am a psychologist practicing in Iowa, and I see Medicare patients every week who need psychotherapy services for depression. I am one of the only providers of these services in my area."]**

I understand that psychologists are facing a 7% payment decrease in 2021 so that higher payments can be made for E/M services. This would be a devastating loss, because as you know, psychologists have already faced more than a decade of reimbursement cuts for their services. Most important, this additional decrease comes at a time when psychological services play a critical role in the lives of America's senior citizens, as our elderly population continues to grow.***[Include personal examples of your work, such as "I provide neuropsychological testing for older adults to determine if they have dementia. This fee reduction will cause me to reduce the number of Medicare patients I see or focus my practice on patients with commercial insurance."]***

At the same time, I am very pleased to see that psychologists who provide Health Behavior Assessment and Intervention (H&B) services will see increases due to a new coding structure and higher values in 2020. Physical health conditions are taking a heavy toll on Medicare beneficiaries, and we know from research that increasing access to psychological and behavioral health services will improve patient outcomes and reduce overall spending. ***[Consider including personal examples of your work, such as "I am a health psychologist and work with patients who have diabetes to improve their compliance with taking medications, monitoring blood sugar, and improving healthy eating. I have seen how this improves their health and quality of life."]***

In the strongest terms possible, I urge you to (a) exclude psychologists from the 7% payment reduction in 2021, and (b) adopt the proposed revisions and value increases for the H&B codes.

Thank you for considering my views on these issues.

Sincerely,  
Dr. XXXX

**\*\* COMMENTS FOR PSYCHOLOGIST SCIENTISTS/EDUCATORS**

As a psychologist, I am writing to comment on the CMS proposed Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for 2020, and its effect on both psychologists and on our communities.

I understand that psychologists who treat patients in Medicare are facing a 7% payment decrease in 2021 so that higher payments can be made for E/M services. This would be a devastating loss, because as you know, psychologists have already faced more than a decade of reimbursement cuts for their services. Most importantly, this additional decrease comes at a time when psychological services play a critical role in the lives of America's senior citizens, as our elderly population continues to grow.

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