



## Section for Psychiatric & Substance Abuse Services

**To:** Members, AHA's Section for Psychiatric & Substance Abuse Services  
**From:** Rebecca Chickey, Director, Section for Psychiatric & Substance Abuse Services  
**Subject:** Update on Key Issues in the Behavioral Health Care Field: [May 2017](#)

### AHA Advocacy Update

The U.S. House of Representatives has voted 217-213 to pass the [American Health Care Act](#) (AHCA), legislation to repeal and replace parts of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The bill would make significant changes to the Medicaid program, including repealing the ACA's Medicaid expansion and cutting nearly \$840 billion from the program. An [amendment](#) by Rep. Tom MacArthur (R-NJ) would allow states to [waive](#) certain insurance rules and consumer protections required under the ACA, specifically those related to essential health benefits and community rating, thereby impacting pre-existing conditions. An additional [amendment](#) by Rep. Fred Upton (R-MI) would establish an \$8 billion pool to support individuals with pre-existing conditions. For a summary of the bill, please see our special [web resource](#). In a [statement](#), AHA President and CEO Rick Pollack said: "America's hospitals and health systems are deeply disappointed in the House passage of the AHCA because it will jeopardize health coverage for millions of Americans."

Generic Drug Legislation: Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) has introduced the [Creating and Restoring Equal Access to Equivalent Samples Act](#), which targets anticompetitive behaviors used to block and delay entry of generic drugs. Among other [provisions](#), the bipartisan legislation would allow a generic drug manufacturer facing a sample-sharing delay tactic to bring an action in federal court for injunctive relief and allow a judge to award damages to deter future delaying conduct. "The AHA supports policies to advance sustainable and fair drug prices while encouraging innovation of new therapies," AHA Executive Vice President Tom Nickels said in a [letter](#) of support for the bill.

Extending Access to Physicians in Underserved Areas: Reps. Brad Schneider (D-IL) and Darrell Issa (R-CA) have introduced AHA-supported legislation ([H.R. 2141](#)) to improve and extend the Conrad State 30 program until 2021, providing a House companion to the [Senate bill](#) (S. 898). First enacted in 1994, the program allows state health departments to request J-1 visa waivers for up to 30 foreign physicians per year to work in federally designated Health Professions Shortage Areas or Medically Underserved Areas. The new bills would increase state allocations to 35 physicians per year and provide flexibility to expand the number of waivers in states where the demand exceeds the limit, among other improvements.

Fund Cost-Sharing Subsidies: Congress and the administration must fund cost-sharing reductions for at least two years to protect access to care for low- and moderate-income consumers in the individual health insurance market, the AHA, America's Health Insurance Plans, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Benefits Council, American Medical Association, Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, Federation of American Hospitals and U.S. Chamber of Commerce [said](#) recently. According to recent news reports, the White House has said it will continue paying the cost-sharing subsidies, though it was unclear for how long. The National Governors Association also [urged](#) Congress to fund the cost sharing reductions for fiscal years 2017 and 2018 to help stabilize the individual health insurance market.

### AHA Regulatory Update

JUST RELEASED -- Joint Commission Standard on Ligature Risks: A Joint Commission (TJC) FAQ webpage addresses new and in effect standards on "[Ligature Risks – Assessing and Mitigating Risk for Suicide and Self-Harm](#)." The page outlines TJC's expectations for identifying and managing ligature risks in the hospital setting, which would include inpatient psychiatric hospitals, inpatient psychiatric units in

general acute care hospitals and non-behavioral health units designated for the treatment of psychiatric patients (i.e., special rooms/safe rooms in Emergency Departments or Medical Units).

CDC Training Series on Opioid Prescribing Guidelines: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released an overview module on the guidelines in a new [online training series](#) to help clinicians apply its [opioid prescribing guidelines](#) for adults with chronic pain. Future modules are expected to address: communicating with patients; treating chronic pain without opioids; deciding whether to prescribe opioids; opioid dosing and titration; reducing opioid risks; assessing and addressing opioid use disorder; and implementing the guidelines in the practice.

### **AHA Resources**

New AHA Hospitals Against Violence Resource Available: In a new [podcast](#) hosted by AHA's Physician Leadership Forum and Hospitals Against Violence initiative, the director of the employee assistance program at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston discusses the organization's multidisciplinary response team for responding to threats of violence, a resource to patients, families, visitors and employees. For additional podcasts and resources on combatting violence in communities and hospitals, visit [www.aha.org/hospitalsagainstviolence](http://www.aha.org/hospitalsagainstviolence).

New Governance Resource for Hospitals and Health Systems: [Trustee Insights](#), the AHA's new quarterly update for hospital leaders and boards, offers briefs on some of the hottest topics in health care and webinar and video content that can be used for boardroom education and discussion. To subscribe, visit <http://trustees.aha.org>, the AHA's one-stop resource for high-performing boards.

Build Your Leadership Pipeline This Summer: Registration is open for [host sites](#) to participate in the Institute for Diversity in Health Management's [Summer Enrichment Program](#), a 10-week paid internship that matches highly qualified, diverse health care graduate students with hospitals and health care organizations. To learn more, contact Jasmin Clark at (312) 422-2658 or [ifd-sep@aha.org](mailto:ifd-sep@aha.org).

AHA Releases National Hospital Week Planning Guide: May 7-13 is National Hospital Week, an annual celebration of hospitals and the men and women who support the health of their communities. This year's theme is "[The Healing Heart of Healthcare](#)."

The [May Behavioral Health Update](#) includes information on: The [nomination](#) of Elinore McCance-Katz, M.D., as the first-ever Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use; a [proposed rule](#) that includes proposed updates to the Inpatient Psychiatric Facility Quality Reporting Program; new resources available from the [Behavioral Health Workforce Research Center](#); and more. [Click here](#) for more AHA resources on behavioral health, including case examples of AHA member organizations using innovation to improve access to behavioral health care and reduce the impact of the opioid crisis.

Finally, as you know May is *Mental Health Awareness Month*. AHA joins other organizations in spreading the word that mental health treatment works. AHA is raising awareness of the value of behavioral health services through multiple media outlets, including the upcoming [May issue of H&HN](#); [videos](#); [AHA tweets](#); upcoming webinars; and more. Consider engaging your own organization in awareness activities, as indeed *there is no health without mental health*.

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