

Behavioral Health IT Providers and Congress Convene for Briefing on Importance of Electronic Health Records in Behavioral Health

PRESS RELEASE

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BEHAVIORAL HEALTH IT CHANGES WILL SAVE MILLIONS IN TAX DOLLARS AND IMPROVE PATIENT CARE

WASHINGTON- JULY 22, 2014

WASHINGTON, DC- JULY 22, 2014 – The Behavioral Health Information Technology Coalition today joined Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (RI) and Rob Portman (OH) for a congressional staff briefing on Behavioral Health IT and its role in saving tax dollars and improving care quality. The congressional hosts are also the lead co-sponsors of the Behavioral Health Information Technology Act (S. 1517/S.1685) and hosted leaders from behavioral health IT providers, local government, and mental health and addiction industry.

Behavioral Health IT services and interoperability has the potential to produce substantial savings to the health care system by reducing adverse drug-to-drug interactions and emergency room use for the more than 8 million Americans served in the public mental health system.

“We will never achieve integration of physical health and mental health for the significant number of Americans who have co-morbidities unless we provide the funding for behavioral health providers to adopt the technology they need to share clinical data with physical health providers,” said Kevin Scalia, Executive Vice President of Netsmart, a longtime coalition member.

“Community behavioral health providers serve a patient/consumer population with acute psychiatric care needs combined with co-occurring chronic diseases including diabetes, emphysema, COPD and cirrhosis. Increasingly, in order to communicate with primary care physicians, hospitals and medical specialists, we need Electronic Health Records (EHRs) in order to coordinate care,” said Chuck Ingoglia, Vice President for Public Policy and Practice Improvement at the National Council for Behavioral Health.

“ABHW member companies work to coordinate behavioral health care with an individual’s medical care and use clinical outcomes to help measure the effectiveness of a consumer’s treatment. EHRs [Electronic Health Records] improve and simplify the exchange of information, which enhances treatment,” said Pamela Greenberg, President and CEO of the Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness.

“Behavioral Health Information Technology is crucial to fully integrate community providers into this nation’s healthcare continuum. This technology saves much more than time and money – it saves lives,” said William Daroff, Senior Vice President for Public Policy and Director of the Washington office of The Jewish Federations of North America.

At this time, no fewer than five House and Senate bills have been introduced in the 113th Congress that add mental health and addiction providers to the HITECH Act. Virtually all of them have strong bipartisan support with co-sponsors spanning the ideological spectrum from the Congressional Black Caucus to the House Republican Doctors Caucus.

The Behavioral Health Information Technology Coalition is the unifying voice of America's mental health and IT providers comprised of organizations and companies such as American Psychological Association (APA), Centerstone, National Association of Counties, National Association of County Behavioral Health Directors, National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems, National Association of Social Workers, National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, The Jewish Federations of North America, Netsmart Technologies, National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors, Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness, amongst others.

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