

Behavioral Health IT Providers Applaud the Inclusion of Resources for Behavioral Health EHRs in Rep. Tim Murphy's [R-PA] Legislation

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

LEGISLATION FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS (EHRs) WILL SAVE MILLIONS IN MEDICAID SPENDING

WASHINGTON, DC- MAY 1, 2015 – The Behavioral Health Information Technology Coalition today applauds the inclusion of an important provision to expand Medicaid and Medicare Meaningful Use Incentive Payments in Rep. Tim Murphy's [R-PA] legislation for behavioral health providers and settings, including psychiatric hospitals, psychologists, community mental health centers, and substance abuse facilities, to purchase electronic health records.

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 visits for the more than 8 million Americans served in the public mental health system.

"Persons served in the behavioral health space are among the largest utilizers of Medicaid dollars due to the high incidence of co-occurring physical health disorders and which often lead to extensive visits to emergency rooms," said Kevin Scalia, Netsmart executive vice president. "Sixty-seven percent of that population have co-occurring conditions ranging from diabetes to heart disease. Coordinated care -- made possible in part by EHRs -- can improve their quality of life and lower healthcare costs."

"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 interoperable Electronic Health Records (EHRs) in order to coordinate care," said Chuck Ingoglia, Senior Vice President for Public Policy and Practice Improvement at the National Council for Behavioral Health.

"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.

In the 113th Congress, five House and Senate bills were introduced that add mental health and addiction providers to the HITECH Act. Virtually all of them had 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, Jewish Federations of North America, National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems,

National Association of Social Workers, National Council for Behavioral Health, Netsmart, National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors, and Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness. Visit the BHIT Coalition website at www.bhitcoalition.org.

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