



**CONNECT
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California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists
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March 13, 2020

Mary Watanabe
Deputy Director of Health Policy and Stakeholder Relations
Department of Managed Health Care
980 9th Street, Suite 500
Sacramento, CA 95814-2725

RE: COVID-19 and Telehealth

Dear Ms. Watanabe:

The California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT), California Psychological Association (CPA), National Association of Social Workers-California Division (NASW), California Association of Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors (CALPCC), and the California Psychiatric Association have come together to express extreme concerns about many California health care plans' lack of adherence to federal, state and local warnings, proclamations and recommendations about COVID-19, telehealth and social distancing. Over the last two weeks, we have received hundreds of calls and emails from our providers requesting guidance on whether they choose continuity of care *or* non-payment of services.

In order to allow patients to access treatment during this pandemic, our members have reached out to their contracted health plans requesting to utilize telehealth. As of this morning, only Kaiser has waived the telehealth credentialing process and affirmatively stated they would pay for telehealth, thereby allowing providers to continue medically necessary behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment. If there are other plans who have acted accordingly, their announcements have not been received state wide at this point.

We have reviewed and appreciated DMHC's response and guidance to health plans to ease the provider credentialing process for telehealth providers, however, it is not enough. Patients are canceling every hour as concerns with the virus spreading continue to escalate and providers have not received any guidance from the health plans.

We respectfully request that for a 60-day period, DMHC require health plans to reimburse telehealth and waive the telehealth credentialing process. After that 60-day period, DMHC can assess the situation further. Without this action, our providers are forced to decide between client abandonment or lack of payment.

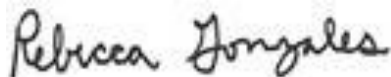
Thank you for your consideration.



Jennifer Alley, State Government Affairs Specialist
California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists



Randall Hagar, Legislative Advocate
California Psychiatric Association



Rebecca Gonzales, Director of Government Affairs and Regulation
National Association of Social Workers



Amanda Levy, Director of Government Affairs
California Psychological Association



G.V. Ayers, Lobbyist
California Association for Licensed Professional Clinical Counselors



CC: Tam Ma, Governor's office
John Connolly, Health and Human Services Agency
Rene Mollow, Department of Health and Human Services
Commissioner Ricardo Lara, Department of Insurance
Christina Wu, California Association of Health Plans