

2011-02 Reimbursement for New Behavioral Health Provider Types APCA Proposed Resolution for ALPHA

WHEREAS behavioral health is an important determinant of social and public health; and

WHEREAS 13.9% of the state's population (95,586) in 2009 resided in a Mental Health Professional Shortage Area;¹ and

WHEREAS Community Health Centers (CHCs) face reimbursement barriers regarding behavioral health staffing when employing Masters level licensed behavioral health providers such as Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs), Marriage and Family Therapists, Licensed Psychological Associates, and other behavioral and mental health clinicians, to meet the behavioral health treatment needs of patients; and

WHEREAS CHCs can only bill for behavioral health services provided by licensed clinical social workers (LCSW) while services provided by other masters level behavioral health providers are not reimbursable; and

WHEREAS a memo issued by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services in 2003 stated that State Medicaid Agencies are "required to reimburse Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and Rural Health Centers (RHCs) for behavioral health services provided by physicians, physicians assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical psychologists, and clinical social workers,"² but several other states have chosen to reimburse other masters level behavioral health provider types in their State Medicaid Plans;³ and

WHEREAS the exclusion of other masters level licensed behavioral health provider types from reimbursement of services by Medicaid, Medicare and private insurers impedes the delivery of behavioral health services to Alaska's who access care at CHCs, yet these provider types are in Alaska and readily available to assist in the provision of services; and

WHEREAS the University of Alaska offers several masters degree programs that prepare graduates for behavioral health professions in addition to the LCSW program; and

WHEREAS due to limited billable professionals, CHCs are forced to choose between providing services without reimbursement or not providing the services at all; and

WHEREAS reimbursement by public and private insurers of additional masters level licensed behavioral health provider types would increase access to quality behavioral health services in Alaska; and

WHEREAS Arkansas, Georgia, and Illinois have implemented Medicaid reimbursement for behavioral health services provided by Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) in Community Health Centers;⁴

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alaska Public Health Association supports amending Alaska's State Medicaid Plan and a requirement for private insurers to provide reimbursement for services provided by other masters level behavioral health providers named above in addition to LCSWs at Community Health Centers in order to improve access to behavioral health services, ameliorate behavioral health outcomes, and enhance the quality of life for Alaskans.

DONE AND DATED THE ____ DAY OF ____ IN THE YEAR 2010

SIGNED BY

Sandra Woods
Board President, Alaska Public Health Association

¹ Kaiser State Health Facts, Henry Kaiser Family Foundation, www.statehealthfacts.org, September 2008, posting accessed July 14, 2010.

² PIN 2004-05 Behavioral Health Services

³ APCA research conducted in March, 2009 via email inquiries to other state Primary Care Associations.

⁴ Ibid.