



C-TAC Policy & Advocacy: Actions Taken During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Last edited: July 22, 2020

Legislative Advocacy

- **March 18, 2020:** C-TAC sent letter to Congressional leadership to the following committees and Members of Congress – [Read letter here](#)
 - **Key Recommendations**
 - Access to personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers
 - Promoting access to palliative care and hospice services
 - Access to needed medications
 - Increase workforce
 - Promotion of telehealth flexibilities
 - Durable Medical Equipment (DME) and Oxygen
 - Promotion of Advance Care Planning
 - The third bill includes the following pieces that C-TAC supported, and we believe will support people living with serious illness
 - New flexibilities for Hospice recertification
 - Direct aid Funding to produce and distribute essential supplies
 - Support for nursing homes; and more

- **April 3, 2020:** C-TAC sent a second letter to Congressional leadership as they crafted new legislation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic – [Read letter here](#)
 - **Key Recommendations**
 - Waive patient cost-sharing and deductibility of Medicare Advance Care Planning Services
 - Include clinical social workers and registered nurses in the definition of eligible practitioners who can bill for Medicare Advance Care Planning services
 - Ensure that advance care planning documentation executed validly in one state are honored in other states



- Include palliative care as an eligible primary care service as an eligible primary care service under the National Health Service Corps program, which would officially recognize palliative care as a subspecialty of public health services

Regulatory Advocacy

- **March 20, 2020:** C-TAC sent a letter to leaders at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, as they developed regulations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. – [Read letter here](#)
 - **Key Recommendations:**
 - Expanding Telehealth
 - Reducing Administrative Burdens on Hospice
 - Enhancing Coverage of Advance Care Planning Services; Increasing Public Awareness of Serious Illness Care and Advance Care Planning Services
 - Supporting a Robust and Well-trained Serious Illness Care Workforce; Expand Access to Home-Based Primary Care
 - Expand Access to Medicare Home Health Services
 - Support for Family Caregivers
 - Increase Funding for Critical Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Front-line Health Care Providers
 - Further, we will be analyzing the third coronavirus bill just passed to see if there are areas where we believe that the Administration needs our support or guidance in implementing the programs
- **April 22, 2020:** C-TAC sent a second letter to HHS and CMS leadership, providing recommended regulations designed to support those with serious illness during the COVID-19 pandemic. – [Read letter here](#)
 - **Key Recommendations**
 - Covering audio-only advance care planning conversations
 - Reconsidering the *Flexibility in Patient Self Determination Act* (Advance Directives) waiver which allows hospitals to disregard advance care planning (ACP) with patients and families



- **Note:** CMS released a new set of waivers on April 30th, designed to create more flexibility for the health care system to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of these waivers had direct implications for the serious illness population and aligned with our recommendations above.
 - Specifically, CMS broadened the list of telehealth services that can be delivered using audio-only technology. ACP is now one of the services which can be delivered by audio-only technology, which has been a key priority for C-TAC and was one of the main regulatory recommendations cited in our recent letter.
 - Read [our full recap](#) to learn more about the waivers.
- **June 1, 2020:** C-TAC submitted comments in response to an interim rule proposed by CMS in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. – [Read comments here](#)
 - **Key Responses:**
 - We reinforced support for recent changes to expand telehealth access
 - We recommended collecting data on the impact of these changes to determine which measures should become permanent. To read our comments, click [here](#).
- **July 7, 2020:** C-TAC responded to the second interim rule proposed by CMS in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. – [Read comments here](#)
 - **Key Responses:**
 - We expressed support for the flexibilities included in this interim rule which enable providers to care for those with serious illness during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - We support the waiver allowing for telehealth services to be provided through audio-only technology and advocated for making the provision permanent.