

Hanley, Lynne

From: Eves, RepMark
Sent: Monday, January 28, 2013 11:33 AM
To: Brown, William; ana.m.hicks@gmail.com
Subject: FW: limiting Mainecare/Medicare reimbursement to LCSWs

Lynne Hanley
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From: Elizabeth Bodor [<mailto:betsy.bodor@me.com>]
Sent: Sunday, January 27, 2013 8:52 PM
To: Eves, RepMark
Subject: re: limiting Mainecare/Medicare reimbursement to LCSWs

Dear Representative Eves:

I am writing to you regarding a section in the Governor's proposed budget related to MaineCare reimbursement for LCPCs/LMFTs providing behavioral health treatment to folks with Medicare and MaineCare (dually insured) coverage. The Governor is proposing to eliminate this reimbursement. Limit Those Eligible for Medicaid and Medicare to Receive Services from Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSW). This initiative aligns with Medicare, which as yet only reimburses LCSWs for Behavioral Health Services. The Savings: FY14: \$3.3 million FY15: \$3.3 million.

Although a resident of Scarborough, I work for Sweetser as a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) in a public school in Biddeford, having had 15 years experience in the field. In order to become an LCPC, I was in a Master's program for 3 years. After 3000 hours of supervised post-Master's experience, I was eligible to take the quite rigorous National Counselor's Exam. This exam consisted of questions in 8 content areas: Human Growth & Development, Social and Cultural Foundations of Counseling, Helping Relationships, Assessment, Group Counseling, Career Counseling and Lifestyle Development, Research and Program Evaluation, and Professional Orientation to Counseling. We also were required to do salient field work. I challenge anyone to say that the requirements for my LCPC license fall short of anything that an LCSW has to do to earn their license.

Reimbursing only LCSWs and not LCPC/LMFTs would be like saying that MaineCare is only going to pay MDs for their treatment of patients and not DOs. That is absurd. LCPCs, LMFTs, and LCSWs are complementary professionals. According to 2011 statistics at www.counseling.org, there are 870 LCPCs, 79 LMFTs, and 2511 LCSWs. Nationally, there are 120,000 LCPCs, 54,785 LMFTs, and 202,924 LCSWs, thus the former two are a significant number. Eliminating almost 950 eligible professionals from Mainecare reimbursement is an injustice to social services and help to the citizens in the state. The children in Biddeford with whom I work are in dire need of counseling and social supports, as they are challenged by the stress of poverty, unemployment, neglect, abuse, trauma, and violence. These are our future taxpayers and employees, and if they cannot develop hope, set and achieve personal goals, learn coping skills to manage their problems, and perceive a future beyond their sometimes miserable existence, then we are in a very sad state.

I understand that the Governor is solely looking for cost savings, however in this instance, paying for outpatient behavioral health services costs the state far less than paying for ongoing medical care and/or hospitalization for behavioral health problems. I have seen significant abuse of TANF, SNAP, and especially disability in Biddeford; I feel that focusing on investigating and stopping these abuses would be a much more fruitful way to cut expenses.

The Governor says that he wants to encourage college-educated professionals & businesses to the state. National social work and counseling associations are small worlds, where word quickly spreads about which states are social-services friendly. We pay taxes and spend our money in-state, but if we are not welcome to practice here, these jobs will leave the state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your thoughtful consideration of this perspective.

Sincerely,

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