BREAKING NEWS: AAMFT and CAMFT Enter Into Historic Collaboration

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) and the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT) are pleased to announce a jointly commissioned, independent economic impact study to examine the cost and savings factors for Medicare Part B coverage of private-practice licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFTs).

“Marriage and family therapists are among the most highly educated and dedicated mental health professionals. Using their unique training to treat issues in the context of family and societal systems, MFTs embrace the holistic view of healthcare that is integral to long-term well-being. The commitment that AAMFT and CAMFT have made to this research is to attempt to quantify those effects and hopefully ultimately bring increased access for care to the public,” remarked Tracy Todd, PhD, AAMFT’s Executive Director.

Practitioner-type eligibility for Medicare Part B must be specified by law. Types of practitioners currently eligible to render covered behavioral services are physicians, doctoral clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, and advance-practice psychiatric nurses. Services rendered by other mental health practitioners such as MFTs are covered if the services fall under those other practitioners’ scopes of practice and if they are proved "incident to" those of an eligible practitioner; however this requires on-site supervision by an eligible practitioner.

Legislation to add private-practice LMFTs as eligible Part B practitioners passed the U.S. Senate in 2003 and 2005, and the U.S. House of Representatives in 2007 and 2009, but in each case the other chamber did not concur with the change. The legislation has been proposed again in the Senate as S562, and a House bill with this provision is expected in September.

The independent study, being conducted by Applied Policy®, will examine data from a previous economic study done by the Congressional Budget Office as well as new modeling factors that include more detailed information about the way LMFTs practice and changes to the Medicare Plan B usage among other factors. Because the study is being independently commissioned, AAMFT and CAMFT have no influence on the potential outcomes.

Jill Epstein, JD, Chief Executive Officer of CAMFT noted, “This partnership between the two leading associations in this field, along with our many divisions and chapters, illustrates just how vital we believe this issue to be. Access to mental health care has been cited time and time again as a priority by the current administration. It is our belief that one of the best ways to demonstrate that commitment is to increase access to this proven effective system of mental health care treatment for Medicare Plan B recipients. While we cannot be sure of the outcomes, we hope that this research ultimately quantifies what we believe to be the immense benefit over cost for LMFT inclusion.”

Initial results from the study are expected during the fall of 2013 with a final report available in 2014.

For updates on this historic initiative, keep an eye on upcoming issues of Therap-eNews, Family Therapy Magazine, and AAMFT’s social media accounts.