

National Association for Behavioral Healthcare

Access. Care. Recovery.



Special Executive Committee Call March 13, 2020 Minutes

Present: Members: Pat Hammer, Board Chair; Mary Pawlikowski (for Jameson Norton), Karen Johnson (for Matt Peterson), John Hollinsworth, Chris Roussos, Eric Kim, Michele Gougeon, Mark Covall

Staff: Shawn Coughlin, Kirsten Beronio, Maria Merlie, Julia Richardson, Sarah Wattenberg, Emily Wilkins, Jessica Zigmond

Note: *The NABH Executive Committee (EC) held a special conference call on Friday, March 13 to discuss challenges and priorities at the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. There was no formal agenda; these minutes include highlights from the call.*

NABH President and CEO Shawn Coughlin said the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) asked NABH representatives to join CMS officials for a phone call to discuss concerns and challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic. The call was scheduled for the same day, Friday, March 13 at 4 p.m., following the Special EC call.

Shawn asked EC members to identify specific issues for NABH to mention during the call with CMS officials.

Chris Roussos said Sequel Youth and Family Services would like to know about potential relaxation of staffing-ratio standards. He also said Sequel is temporarily halting home passes for youth to minimize the risk and spread of exposure to the virus.

Mary Pawlikowski from Vanderbilt asked NABH to request more detailed guidance from CMS about expanding telehealth services. One concern is the patients that do not have access to both audio and visual capabilities. This is increasingly important as ambulatory services shift to telehealth services.

Eric Kim from Signature Healthcare Services underscored the need for CMS to provide more guidance on both staffing ratios and loosened telehealth restrictions.

John Hollinsworth from Acadia said staffing will continue to be a greater challenge with schools closed and some staff quarantined.

Karen Johnson from UHS cited the following concerns:

- Facilities are running short on supplies; where do behavioral healthcare providers rank in order of receiving those resources?
- All guidance needs to be timely as providers manage patients because delays put patients and staff at risk.
- Restricted visitation services will prevent family therapy sessions; will payers deny care or coverage?

- There needs to be greater flexibility in EMTALA.

Shawn suggested a weekly call with the NABH Board of Trustees (BOT) to discuss developments, key guidance, and new issues related to Covid-19. EC members agreed.

The BOT call was scheduled for the following Friday, March 20 at 3 p.m. ET.