Legislative Briefing

OHA Health Policy Action

Your guide to proposed health legislation, what we think about it, and what we're doing about it.

March 2013

S.B. No. 858; *An Act Concerning Health Insurance Coverage for Telemedicine*

What is this bill about?

SB 858 will require insurers to reimburse healthcare providers for telemedicine services including medical advice, diagnosis, care and treatment at the same rate as in-person services. Expansion of access to telemedicine services will impact a number of vulnerable populations including those in rural areas, the elderly, and people with mental health issues. The benefits of telemedicine include increase access to remote consultation for routine, chronic or acute care, resulting in earlier diagnosis and intervention. Studies of telemedicine have shown dramatic results in reduced hospitalizations, improved patient outcomes, and cost savings.

CMS began providing basic coverage of telehealth services in 1999. Subsequent assessments of the benefits to health, access, and cost have resulted in gradual ongoing expansion of its use. In Connecticut, Medicaid has reimbursed for some telemedicine services since 2003, but private insurers are not required to. SB 858 would apply to individual and group health insurance policies in Connecticut. Beginning in 2013, 16 states (not including CT) will have such requirements.

What are the implications of this bill for healthcare consumer advocacy?

It is important that telemedicine services are clearly defined, that consumers know the services they are entitled to, and that providers know what services they can provide

Please refer all media, agency, and legislator inquiries to Vicki Veltri

Talking Points

1. OHA is aware of this proposed legislation and submitted written public testimony **in support** of this bill.
2. This bill will require insurers to reimburse healthcare providers for telemedicine services at the same rate as in-person services
3. OHA supports this legislation based on principles of access to quality health care and evidence-based improvements to our healthcare system.

OHA represents the collective voice of 3.5 million healthcare consumers. For our state to be competitive, our people must be healthy. Our mission is to • assure managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare • educate consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans • inform legislators of problems consumers face in accessing care and propose solutions to those problems.