

Support Access to Occupational Therapy Mental Health Services under Medicare

Discussion Points

Note: Begin by explaining why occupational therapy is an important service for people with a mental health diagnosis. Each person explains this differently, these are key points I find useful. Remember, OT in mental health can be a very new concept to some people and they may be skeptical.

Talking Points

- The key outcome of occupational therapy services is to help a person maintain, learn, or regain functional capabilities – i.e., those skills they need to function independently every day.
- Difficulty with these skills of everyday living can be caused by physical, cognitive, or mental health challenges. Occupational therapy's role is to help a person engage in activities that are meaningful to them, and help them live as independently as possible, regardless of the cause.
- Occupational therapy began in mental health, but the number of practitioners in mental health settings declined over the century, due to changes to reimbursement.

The Bill:

- Occupational therapy is a covered service under Medicare for a person who has a mental health diagnosis.
- Occupational therapy practitioners are underutilized in addressing the psychosocial needs of beneficiaries - to improve functional skills and engagement in daily activities. OT can play an important part in helping current mental health workforce shortages.
- This bill would require the Secretary of HHS to provide education and outreach to stakeholders about OT's role in providing services to beneficiaries with a mental health or substance use disorder under Medicare.
- **This bill does not add a new benefit to Medicare.** It does not change the scope of OT services in these programs or change state scope of practice. It is simply providing education on an existing benefit.
- **This bill does not cost anything**, as it does not add any new benefits and is clarifying existing benefits, the Congressional Budget Office has scored this bill as "no cost".
- This bill was included in the bi-partisan Better Mental Health Care, Lower-Cost Drugs and Extenders Act. We hope that it can be included in end of year legislation.

Your Ask:

Please co-sponsor the OT Mental Health Parity Act (H.R.8220/S.1592) and help this bill be signed into law by the end of this Congress.