

# Action Alert



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## Urge Your Members of Congress to Co-Sponsor The Medicare Mental Health Access Act

APAPO is excited to announce that on December 16, 2015 Rep. Kristi Noem (R-SD), joined by Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), introduced H.R. 4277, the Medicare Mental Health Access Act, in the U.S. House of Representatives. This bipartisan legislation would allow psychologists to provide Medicare services to patients without unnecessary physician supervision in all treatment centers by amending the Medicare definition of physician to include psychologists.

The Medicare Mental Health Access Act is professional psychology's priority legislation, and we need your help contacting Congress!

**[Click here to write to your Members of Congress today and urge them to co-sponsor the Medicare Mental Health Access Act!](#)**

Direct Link: <http://capwiz.com/apapractice/issues/alert/?alertid=69079631>

If you use social media, tweet thank you to Reps. Noem and Schakowsky and then tweet your Member of Congress! Sample Tweets:

- Thank you [@RepKristiNoem](#) & [@JanSchakowsky](#) 4 sponsoring #HR4277 2 increase #MentalHealthAccess 4 #Medicare patients
- .@ [insert representative's twitter handle] pls cosponsor #HR4277 2 increase #MentalHealthAccess 4 #Medicare patients

[Click here for a list of Member of Congress Twitter handles.](#)

### **Share your Story**

Personal examples of problems and headaches caused by the physician oversight requirement will help us demonstrate to Members of Congress the need to support the Medicare Mental Health Access Act, share your story at: <http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2289121/YourStory>.

### **Background Information**

Current Medicare law prohibits psychologists from practicing without physician referral or supervision in many treatment settings, even when they are authorized to do so under their state's licensure law.

Psychologists are a major provider of mental and behavioral health services to Medicare beneficiaries, but are unable to provide their full range of services due to Medicare's outdated and inappropriate physician oversight requirements. Psychologists provide over 70 percent of hospital inpatient, partial hospital, and residential mental health care; nearly 50 percent of hospital outpatient mental health care; and nearly all

psychological and neuropsychological testing. Psychologists are licensed to practice without supervision in all states and the District of Columbia. Psychologists practice independently, without physician supervision, in all private sector health plans, Medicare Advantage plans, the Veterans Health Administration, and TRICARE.

Unlike other health insurance payers, Medicare requires physician supervision of psychologists' services in many treatment settings, which means that when no physician is available, psychologists cannot treat beneficiaries. Medicare requires supervision of psychologists' services provided in hospital outpatient departments, partial hospitalization programs, comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation facilities, rural health clinics, and federally qualified health centers. Supervision of psychologists' services is frequently done by physicians who do not have significant training in psychological treatment.

By adding psychologists to Medicare's "physician" definition, H.R. 4277 would allow psychologists to practice independently in all Medicare treatment settings consistent with state licensure. The Medicare physician definition already includes other non-allopathic or osteopathic physician disciplines: chiropractors, optometrists, dentists, and podiatrists.

H.R. 4277 sponsors Reps. Noem and Schakowsky are members of the influential House Ways & Means Committee and House Energy & Commerce Committee, respectively. These committees have jurisdiction over health care legislation. APAPO is solidifying sponsors to introduce a companion bill in the U.S. Senate and more information will be forthcoming soon.

**For more information, contact APAPO Government Relations Office at [Pracgovt@apa.org](mailto:Pracgovt@apa.org) or (202) 336-5889. Visit APAPO on-line at [APAPracticeCentral.org/Advocacy](http://APAPracticeCentral.org/Advocacy).**

*You help others. We help you.*



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