



CITY, COUNTY, AND STATE NEWS

ALBANY, NY: [Local partnership aims to expand mental health care service:](#) Two Capital Region business leaders are teaming up to make mental health care services more accessible to local patients. Dr. John D. Bennett, president and CEO of CDPHP, and technology investor, Dan Pickett, are partnering to provide CDPHP members with access to aptihealth, an online/smartphone-enabled tool that connects patients to comprehensive mental health support, all from the comfort of their home.

LA COUNTY, CA: [LA County Nearly Doubles Size of Program That Diverts People With Mental Illness From Jail:](#) The L.A. County Board of Supervisors voted today to nearly double the size of a program that diverts people with a mental illness who are incompetent to stand trial into community-based treatment. With the county accepting about \$35 million in additional state funds for the expansion, the Office of Diversion and Reentry will increase the number of beds available in its Felony Incompetent to Stand Trial program from 215 to 415. Advocates had pushed for the county to accept the increased funding from the state, citing too many people languishing in county jail as they await transfer to a mental health facility. This move comes at a time when there are more people with mental health issues in L.A. County's jails than ever — more than 6,000. Pamila Lew, senior attorney at Disability Rights California, called the vote “fantastic, very welcome news.”

ORANGE COUNTY, FL: [Pilot program in Orange County to de-escalate situations using mental-health experts a ‘success,’ receives more funding:](#) The University of Central Florida evaluated the program's first two months and found the team received 700 mental health referrals, responded to more than 250 calls for service and issued 16 Baker Acts with zero arrests. “Although the unit is small right now and can't fit the needs of the entire community, just based on those success stories ... we already believe the program is a success,” Sheriff John Mina said. Orange County commissioners approved \$115,000 to be used on salaries for the clinicians, so the pilot program can continue for the rest of the year.

WAYNE COUNTY, MI: ['Second responders': Canton pilot program embeds social worker with police:](#) For the next year, the Canton Police Department will have an "embedded" social worker available for calls involving mental health emergencies, the township announced Friday, hailing the social worker as its "second responder." Canton Township's board of trustees approved Thursday a contract with Hegira to provide its embedded social worker program. The contract is for about \$83,000, paid in monthly installments.



NATIONAL

[Senate Introduces Mental Health Counselors in Medicare Legislation](#)

Bipartisan legislation that would include licensed mental health counselors (LMHCs), as well as licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFTs), as Medicare providers, has just been introduced in the United States Senate. The Mental Health Access Improvement Act of 2021, S. 828, was introduced in the Senate by Senator John Barrasso (R-WY) and Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI). Representative Mike Thompson (D-CA) and Representative John Katko (R-NY) introduced the companion legislation (HR 432) in January in the House. This bipartisan legislation would require Medicare to finally recognize LMHCs as Medicare-eligible providers of covered behavioral health services to older adults and other Medicare beneficiaries.

[Shaheen Supports Funding Increase to Fight Opioid Epidemic](#)

U.S. Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire has helped introduce a bill that would increase funding to fight the opioid epidemic, which has worsened during the coronavirus pandemic. The bill increases funding authorization levels and sets out new policy reforms in the Comprehensive Addiction & Recovery Act, which was enacted in 2016. Policy changes include new research into non-opioid pain management alternatives and into long-term treatment outcomes to sustain recovery from addiction. The bill establishes a commission to improve the quality and safety of care for drug overdoses and substance use disorders.

WEEKEND READING

[The Washington Post](#): Amid attacks, Asian Americans challenge traditions that discourage speaking out, seeking therapy

[The Hill](#): A post-COVID reimagining of telehealth in Medicare

[The Hill](#): Time to prioritize the mental health of our frontline health care heroes

[AARP](#): Think You Are Too Old for Mental Health Therapy?

[ABC News](#): Mass shootings add to mental health issues already affected by COVID-19

[ABC News](#): Dying of loneliness: What COVID-19 has taught us about the opioid epidemic

[Financial Times](#): ‘I just feel broken’: doctors, mental health and the pandemic

****The information compiled in this email originated from the following news sources: The Washington Post, The Hill, American Mental Health Counselors Association, The Record, LAist, WFTV****