

MENTAL HEALTH WEEKLY

Essential information for decision-makers

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Colorado lawmakers passed bills last week that would invest millions in behavioral health. The move follows a state of emergency declared by Children's Hospital Colorado, which has seen increasing numbers of children coming into emergency departments and inpatient units following suicide attempts and other behavioral health problems.

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Colorado calls for pediatric 'state of emergency' for children's MH issues

Observing the health challenges facing children in Colorado that officials say have gone beyond crisis levels, with unprecedented numbers of children presenting with mental health conditions, largely suicidal ideation and attempts, a children's hospital in Colorado on May 27 declared a pediatric "state of emergency" for youth mental health.

Children's Hospital Colorado has seen a 90% increase in demand for behavioral health treatment in

the past two years, officials stated in a news release. Across the state, counties are reporting that they are seeing a similar increase in the need for mental health services that they're unable to meet.

"We've seen a significant increase in the severity of kids living with mental illness and other mental health conditions; they're experiencing a higher level of need and acuity," Heidi Baskfield, vice president of population health and advocacy at Children's Hospital Colorado, told *MHW*. "Local schools are overwhelmed and are asking for help."

The state is "unique" in that it has many programs administered at the local level, said Baskfield. That alone puts a significant burden on

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Court action, new spending may improve New Hampshire crisis care

A combination of judicial action and strong bipartisan support for mental health initiatives is offering reason for encouragement in New Hampshire's advocacy community over reducing wait times for critical mental health services.

Following last month's state Supreme Court ruling that psychiatric patients who are involuntarily held in hospital emergency rooms have a

right to timely due process, Gov. Chris Sununu this month publicly laid out plans for how \$100 million in federal and state funding would support increasing mental health bed capacity at all levels of care.

Although this spending for the fiscal year that starts July 1 is still subject to review by a conference committee made up of members of both houses of the state legislature, an advocate said the state's political leaders have shown a willingness to improve the mental health system for some time — only to see some of this effort delayed because of immediate needs brought on by the COVID-19 crisis.

"We had moved forward on a 10-year plan in January 2019, and

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Bottom Line...

Last month's ruling by the New Hampshire Supreme Court will require the state to reform a system under which some psychiatric patients have experienced long involuntary holds before receiving care.

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these programs in the community to come with resources, she said. "We can't do it alone," she said. Family, youth and peers and providers should all be involved in some capacity, she noted.

Baskfield added, "We're talking with our peer children's hospitals across the country. Unfortunately, this is not a unique dynamic." As a result of the challenges, the state has had to send record numbers of children out of state for treatment, she said. The state is unable to provide care in moments of crisis for these children, she said. "This is as much a federal issue as it is a state issue," she said.

Legislative support

Colorado House and Senate bills that passed last week will help address the behavioral health needs of children, youth and families. HB 21-1258, which passed June 8, includes \$9 million to be allocated for mental health screenings and sessions for youth ages 18 and younger.

The House bill establishes a temporary youth mental health services program in the Office of Behavioral Health within the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) to facilitate access to mental health services for youth to respond to identified mental health needs,

including those needs that may have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic. The program reimburses providers for up to three mental health sessions with a youth and may provide additional reimbursement subject to available money.

'We're talking with our peer children's hospitals across the country. Unfortunately, this is not a unique dynamic.'

Heidi Baskfield

According to the CDHS, the Colorado Comeback Plan released by Gov. Jared Polis' office put forward a \$400 to \$550 million investment in behavioral health, which includes \$100 million allocated as part of SB 21-137. The bill also includes a \$2 million appropriation for services provided to school-aged children and parents by community mental health center school-based clinicians and prevention specialists.

The Senate and House bills are headed to the governor's office.

"We acknowledge the pandemic has had a negative effect on children and their families," Robert Werthwein, director of the Office of Behavioral Health in the CDHS, told *MHW*. "Colorado youth were already facing behavioral health challenges before the pandemic, and the ongoing isolation and disruption has only added to their hardship."

Werthwein added, "We need to do all we can to make sure youth can heal from the effects of the pandemic and feel prepared going into the next school year. I am thrilled that we are one step closer to providing free, confidential mental health support to Colorado youth."

Pediatrician viewpoint

Rusha Lev, M.D., community pediatrician at a federally qualified health center in Denver, believes more should be done to avoid children with mental health issues having to go to the emergency room to begin with. Lev says she doesn't disagree with the Children's Hospital Colorado's declaration of a state of emergency for children's mental health needs. "It's been in a state of emergency for the past year," Lev told *MHW*.

She says the three things that would be very important on a practical

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level for primary care pediatricians in dealing with day-to-day mental health are “robust and prompt access for our patients” to (1) community mental health professionals, (2) school-based mental health professionals and (3) integrated behavioral health professionals embedded in primary care clinics.

“What we do in general is prevention and wellness care,” said Lev, also affiliated with the Colorado chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (see AAP statement, right). “I have persistently seen kids who definitely need help but they are on a wait list for couple of months. That’s a long time.”

Schools and community mental health centers need a lot more providers and resources, she said. “Many schools don’t even have dedicated mental health providers,” Lev said. “We need a lot more bodies on the ground to see these kids. Counseling, medication, whatever they may need to prevent more of these dire effects.”

In the federally qualified health center where she works, while integrative behavioral health services are provided, the lone behavioral health clinician cannot keep up with the demand, Lev stated. She hopes COVID-19 funding from the administration and the state will go toward programs and services for children

AAP Colorado supports state of emergency declaration

Officials from the Colorado chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics called on their state leaders to:

- increase access to evidence-based prevention, early identification and early intervention;
- expand mental health services in schools;
- integrate mental/behavioral health into pediatric primary care;
- strengthen the child and adolescent mental and behavioral health workforce;
- increase insurance coverage and payment; and
- ensure mental health parity.

with mental health conditions and those in crisis. “We need to try to help and head this off,” she said.

To meet the demand, Children’s Hospital Colorado officials, citing generous community donors, say they will increase mental health inpatient, outpatient and day services by more than 50% by March 2022. Additionally, they are expanding facilities to create more space for patients who need mental health services, including expanding the hospital’s eating disorder program, intensive inpatient unit, partial hospitalization program and neuropsychiatric special care program, which treats children with severe autism who are in crisis.

Lena Heilmann, Ph.D., MNM, suicide prevention strategies manager

with the Colorado Office of Suicide Prevention at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, said officials recognize the stress young people are currently under. Suicide fatalities occur across the life span, she told *MHW*. “We want to support people of all ages; parents and grandparents are impacted as well,” she said.

“We’re seeing multiple factors coming together, such as relationship problems, isolation and not feeling safe,” Heilmann said. The pandemic has had a variety of impacts; it’s hard to say if it has a one-to-one causation with suicide,” she said. “Schools have typically been considered a ‘safe space’; however, children don’t have access and have lost that ‘protective factor.’” •

FDA approves first drug therapy for Alzheimer’s in 18 years

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) last week approved Aduhelm (aducanumab), considered the first novel therapy to be approved for Alzheimer’s patients since 2003. The timely and long-awaited June 8 announcement arrives during National Alzheimer’s & Brain Awareness Month.

Aduhelm, which represents a first-of-its-kind treatment approved for Alzheimer’s disease, is the first therapy that targets the fundamental pathophysiology of the disease, according to the FDA.

Bottom Line...

A patient advocacy group says the new therapy will address a “huge, unmet need” for Alzheimer’s patients.

The debilitating disease affects 6.2 million Americans. Aduhelm was approved using the accelerated approval pathway, which can be used for a drug for a serious or life-threatening illness that provides a meaningful therapeutic advantage over existing treatments, according to the FDA.

Under the accelerated approval provisions, which provide patients suffering from the disease earlier access to the treatment, the FDA is requiring the company, Biogen, to conduct a new randomized, controlled clinical trial to verify the drug’s clinical benefit. If the trial fails to verify clinical benefit, the FDA may initiate proceedings to withdraw approval of the drug.

Gary Small, M.D., chair of psychiatry at Hackensack Meridian Health in New Jersey, said the new

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drug is considered controversial. “Cognitive benefits are not demonstrated in all studies,” Small told *MHW*. “The brain may look better but memory and thinking may not benefit. The FDA will monitor, and the drug could be removed from the market.”

Small, author of *The Memory Bible*, previously worked at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he developed the first brain scan that allows doctors to see the physical evidence of brain aging and Alzheimer's disease in living people. There had been treatments developed over the decades that only helped with the symptoms, he noted. It's typically a very “arduous task” to develop drugs for any disease, especially a complex brain disorder like Alzheimer's, he said.

Alzheimer's research

Researchers evaluated Aduhelm's efficacy in three separate studies representing a total of 3,482 patients, according to the FDA. The studies consisted of double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled dose-ranging studies in patients with Alzheimer's disease. Patients receiving the treatment had significant dose- and time-dependent reduction of amyloid beta plaque, while patients in the control arm of the studies had no reduction of amyloid beta plaque.

These results support the accelerated approval of Aduhelm, which is based on the surrogate endpoint of reduction of amyloid beta plaque in the brain — a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease, the FDA stated. Amyloid beta plaque was quantified using positron emission tomography (PET) imaging to estimate the brain levels of amyloid beta plaque in a composite of brain regions expected to be widely affected by Alzheimer's disease pathology compared to a brain region expected to be spared of such pathology.

According to the FDA, the clinical trials for Aduhelm were the first to show that a reduction in these

plaques — a hallmark finding in the brains of patients with Alzheimer's — is expected to lead to a reduction in the clinical decline of this devastating form of dementia.

Fulfilling unmet need

“There is a huge unmet need for Alzheimer's patients in the United States today, particularly people in the early stages of the disease,” Russ Paulsen, chief operating officer of UsAgainstAlzheimer's, told *MHW*. “This is the first drug in almost 20 years.”

Historically, treatments for Alzheimer's have targeted symptoms, he noted, adding that aducanumab is the first to target the underlying pathology for Alzheimer's. The advocacy group's initial reaction is that the new therapy is a “breakthrough” in the fight against Alzheimer's.

better treatments.” He added, “There is hope for Alzheimer's patients today that wasn't there yesterday.”

UsAgainstAlzheimer's raised concerns about patient access to the new therapy. In a statement, they wrote, “We are very concerned about the ability of patients to gain access to aducanumab, particularly those on Medicare fee-for-service without supplemental insurance. And, shockingly, Medicare does not reimburse patients for the expensive PET scans important to determine whether someone is appropriate for this drug. We intend to work with Biogen and Medicare to make access to this drug affordable for every American who needs it.”

Patient access means working with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and manufactur-

‘There is hope for Alzheimer's patients today that wasn't there yesterday.’

Russ Paulsen

When asked about any concerns related to the accelerated process that the FDA used, Paulsen responded that that's exactly what acceleration is designed to do. “Science wants more data; people don't want to wait,” he said. “This has been the perfect solution.”

Paulsen added, “People with Alzheimer's have been waiting far too long for something that will give them hope, options and more time with their families.”

UsAgainstAlzheimer's realizes that there have been a number of drugs being studied to treat Alzheimer's, with some currently in late-stage trials, Paulsen said. “We're looking for all [drug treatments] to be successful and to give physicians multiple options,” he said.

“This is a turning point,” said Paulsen. “This is the first drug of its kind to be approved by the FDA. We're looking for more options and

ers to make sure people who are the best candidates have access regardless of their economic condition, added Paulsen. Other factors, such as health inequities in the system, need to be addressed, he said. Blacks and Latinos have high rates of Alzheimer's, he noted, adding that they want to ensure everyone who is a candidate has access to the new drug therapy.

Biogen Inc. announced June 8 that it expects to begin shipping its newly approved Alzheimer's drug Aduhelm in about two weeks and has prepared more than 900 health care centers for the intravenous infusion treatment, Reuters reported. •

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Mental Health America announces new president, CEO

Following a rigorous, six-month search, Mental Health America (MHA) has named Schroeder Stribling, social worker and former CEO of a Washington, D.C. nonprofit, as the organization's new CEO effective June 28, replacing Paul Gionfriddo, the former president and CEO who is retiring.

Stribling comes to MHA following 18 years at N Street Village, a nonprofit providing housing support services for women and families in Washington, D.C., where she was most recently the organization's CEO. Under her leadership, N Street Village expanded from one to eight locations. She helped diversify revenue streams, create partnerships with government entities, lead city-wide policy initiatives on homelessness and acquire a smaller nonprofit organization, according to an MHA news release.

Stribling received a bachelor's degree in political science from Wellesley College, a master's in social work from the Smith College School for Social Work and a certificate in nonprofit management from Georgetown University. She began her career in social work and has demonstrated a lifelong commitment to mental health and people with lived experience, according to MHA.

Commenting on her appointment as new president and CEO, Stribling said, "I am honored to be joining MHA as president and CEO and I look forward to leading the organization into the future with the urgency and dedication required of us at this time."

Stribling added, "We face a unique and critical moment in our national history as we emerge from the collective trauma of the pandemic, contend with a dramatic escalation in reports of depression among our youth, and begin a new and long overdue reckoning with racial injustice and violence. In all of *this*, mental health will take center stage."

Formal announcement

MHA formally introduced Stribling during its annual conference, "From Recovery to Resiliency," June 10–12 in Washington, D.C. The organization used a hybrid model this year with nearly 150 in-person attendees and a few thousand who attended virtually, said Jillian Hughes, MHA spokesperson. MHA Board of Directors Chair Peter Carson hosted a Q-and-A with Stribling on June 11, she said.

'Her background as president and CEO and as a former social worker is the right mix of experience we were looking for.'

Jillian Hughes

"We're incredibly excited that Schroeder will be joining us, and we're excited to see how she'll lead us forward," Hughes told *MHW*. "Her background as president and CEO and as a former social worker is the right mix of experience we

were looking for. Her clinical background will serve very well in leading the organization."

The CEO search process was led by MHA Board Chair-elect Jennifer Bright and a search committee composed of MHA staff and board representatives. More than 200 candidates were considered throughout the six-month search. Diversity and a careerlong focus on equity were key factors in the recruitment and selection of a candidate to lead the organization and its 200 local affiliates, MHA stated.

MHA President and CEO Paul Gionfriddo announced his retirement Dec. 10, 2020, after seven years of service (see *MHW*, Dec. 21, 2020; Jan. 3). At MHA, Gionfriddo's contributions have included coining the term "B4Stage4" and using it to promote MHA's efforts toward earlier intervention around mental health conditions, building MHA's successful online screening and screening-to-supports program.

"MHA's strength today is in no small part a result of Paul's leadership during his time as CEO," said Carson. "He was instrumental in building MHA's successful online screening program, enhancing MHA's public education efforts and creating a program to recognize exemplary workplace mental health efforts. We are indebted to his service and we will miss him." •

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the legislature during that year's session had funded a number of initiatives that were priority areas," Kenneth Norton, executive director of the New Hampshire chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI New Hampshire), told *MHW*. "The budget ended up in a veto situation and an agreement was reached in October 2019. The state then acted on procurement, but the pandemic significantly delayed things."

The "Jane Doe" lawsuit brought

against the state Department of Health and Human Services on behalf of a woman in mental health crisis who last year was held for 17 days in a hospital emergency room is now accelerating the pace of state action. The New Hampshire Supreme Court ruled on May 11 that court hearings must take place within 72 hours for any psychiatric patient who is held involuntarily in a hospital emergency room. Fulfilling this mandate will require greater use

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of programs such as mobile crisis care services and wider availability of treatment beds to which to refer patients needing specialized care.

“We want a full continuum of beds, at the inpatient level, in transitional housing, and in the community,” said Norton, who sees the new funding as being able to fulfill this.

Holds continue

There have been substantial challenges around curbing the practice of emergency room boarding in the state. According to local media reports, the state achieved a major development in April 2020 when no one was waiting in an emergency room for a psychiatric bed. Yet that status was short-lived, as the number of holds began to increase again as the pandemic worsened.

On the day NAMI New Hampshire’s Norton spoke with *MHW* last week, he confirmed that only three adults were being held in emergency rooms, but 30 children were awaiting placement.

“Some of this has to do with workforce shortages,” he said. He added, “Less visible than the boarding are the waits for outpatient treatment, which can last weeks or months.” Shortages of suitable housing options also complicate the transition from hospitalization to the community, Norton said.

The spending plans outlined by Sununu at a June 3 news conference would address several of the shortages in the system. Among the additions that reportedly would be made possible with the new funding are 30 hospital emergency beds, 60 transitional housing beds and 20 long-term treatment beds. The press operation for Sununu’s office did not reply to a request for comment from *MHW* by press time last week.

“All of this will go a long way toward alleviating the stress that the system has been under,” Norton said.

Some of the new funding also would support creation of more mobile crisis teams, a priority that had

been articulated prior to the pandemic. Legislation adopted in 2019 had called for the establishment of mobile crisis teams specifically for children, Norton said. The present vision is to make these services available across the life span. Also, an announcement is expected soon on a vendor that will operate a centralized call center to improve crisis care response.

‘We have a high suicide rate in New Hampshire, and in a small state it really impacts the community when there is a suicide, such as of a first responder, or a child.’

Kenneth Norton

Political support

Norton said that over the past several years, mental health issues in general have gained strong support from both the governor’s office and the legislature. He believes public attitudes toward mental health issues took a more positive turn many years ago as a result of the psychological wounds from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. More recently, “The pandemic has heightened awareness,” he said.

Political leaders in the relatively small state have gotten personally engaged in understanding what the system can do and where it has fallen short, Norton suggests. “There is not a big distance here between the legislators and the people,” he said. “We have a high suicide rate in New Hampshire, and in a small state it really impacts the community when there is a suicide, such as of a first responder, or a child.”

But it is also clear that action in the courts is dictating change. Advocates and hospital leaders hailed last month’s state Supreme Court decision as a landmark measure to protect the rights of individuals with mental illness. New Hampshire Hospital Association President Steve Ahnen said in a statement last month, as reported by *The Laconia Daily Sun*, “The court clearly affirmed that when a patient is experiencing a mental health crisis, and receives an Involuntary Emergency Admission designation (a procedure which requires a notarized statement of need and urgency, typically by family members or guardians), that patient should be immediately transferred to the appropriate setting to receive the specialized care and due process that they need and deserve.”

The outcome of this state case also could influence the progress of a federal lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in 2018, also alleging the state’s noncompliance with due process. A 2020 ruling stated that the 72-hour clock for timely processing starts upon a patient’s emergency admission. The ACLU continues to litigate that case over the state’s level of compliance with the ruling. •

Correction

In our lead article in the June 7 issue, “NJAMHAA celebrates 70th anniversary of improving lives, strong advocacy,” we indicated “Many government and state leaders, including Gov. Phil Murphy and former governors James McGreevey, Jon Corzine and Chris Christie, honored and paid tribute to NJAMHAA during the Zoom celebration.” Instead of Jon Corzine, we should have referenced Richard Codey. *MHW* apologizes for the error.

Study finds social isolation has ‘detrimental’ impact on girls

COVID-19 has had a significant, detrimental impact on adolescent mental health, especially in girls, according to a new study — considered the first to investigate and document age- and gender-specific changes in adolescent mental health and problems and substance use during the COVID-19 pandemic while accounting for upward trends that were appearing before the pandemic.

The study of over 59,000 Icelandic adolescents was conducted by a team of Icelandic and North American behavioral and social scientists, according to a Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health news release. The study's findings were published in *The Lancet Psychiatry*.

The study found that negative mental health outcomes were disproportionately reported by girls and older adolescents (13–18-year-olds), compared to same-age peers prior to the pandemic. At the same time, it revealed a decline in cigarette smoking, e-cigarette usage and alcohol intoxication among 15- to 18-year-old adolescents during the pandemic.

“The decrease observed in substance use during the pandemic may be an unintended benefit of the isolation that so many adolescents have endured during quarantine,” said collaborating senior investigator John Allegrante, an affiliated professor of sociomedical sciences at the Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health and an applied behavioral scientist, in the release.

Thorhildur Halldorsdottir, a clinical psychologist and assistant professor of psychology at Reykjavik University who is the study's co-principal investigator, said the study represents a “landmark contribution to what we now know about just

how psychologically devastating being socially isolated from peers and friends during the ongoing pandemic has been for young people.”

Prior research

According to the researchers, prior studies have not been designed to determine whether clinically relevant levels of depression — as opposed to self-reported depressive symptoms — and substance use have increased during the pandemic.

Previous studies of adolescents during COVID-19 found evidence of increased mental health problems and certain types of substance use that had been rising before the pandemic. This study, however, compares current data with several pre-pandemic time points, which enabled the researchers to separate the effect of COVID-19 from other recent, downward trends in adolescent mental health.

The implication of the new study is that interventions intended to lessen the negative impact of the pandemic on adolescent mental health might help improve the mental health outlook for young people around the world who have been caught up in the pandemic, observed Allegrante, who is also senior professor of health education at Columbia Teachers College.

Universal isolation

“Isolation during the pandemic has been universal and it is global, and it is having a clinically important, negative impact on young people who have not been in school during the pandemic,” Allegrante said. “Whether an adolescent was an Icelander in Reykjavik who had been at home for most of the last year or an American in New York City, living under the same circumstances — being at home, engaged in remote learning and separated from friends — the consequences of not going to school not only set back their learning but also negatively affected their

mental health. What we don't know is by how much.”

Allegrante added, “The study shows that population-level prevention efforts, especially for girls, are warranted,” but that “more study is needed to determine the long-term effects of quarantine and being socially isolated from one's peers, including the effects on learning and academic achievement and relationships with parents, siblings, and peers.”

In a commentary that accompanies the article's publication, Gertrud Sofie Hafstad and Else-Marie Augusti, both senior researchers at the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies in Oslo, write that the study “clearly shows that gauging the mental health status of adolescents over time is of imminent importance.” •

STATE NEWS

Minnesota council considering adding MH professionals to support police response

The Winona City Council in Minnesota last week considered adding two full-time mental health professionals to complement or support police response in situations where law enforcement may not be necessary, the *Winona Daily News* reported June 6. More specifically, as stated in the request, the professionals will take on a role similar to that of first responders and provide “proactive response and follow up support to individuals who often use emergency services for mental health crisis.” An additional benefit to having a dedicated professional is they would reduce call volume so law enforcement has more capacity for other services. The city has studied and considered programs using trained mental health professionals for the past four years, the request states. Just last fall, a coalition of Winona community members, stakeholders

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and city staff formed the “Alternative Response Group” and subsequently created the “Alternative Response Team,” which was described as a model that works best for Winona. The positions have already been budgeted for and will be provided through Hiawatha Valley Mental Health Center. If approved, the contract with Hiawatha Valley will run for three years, through 2024.

Nevada lawmaker seeks funds to expand MH programs

Nevada Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto met with first responders and mental health professionals at Desert Parkway Behavioral Healthcare Hospital in Las Vegas following her introduction of a new bill designed to provide funding for and break down barriers to behavioral services for those suffering from a mental health crisis, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* reported June 2. Cortez Masto spoke with members of the Las Vegas Fire Department’s crisis response team, a pilot program funded by one state and one federal grant in partnership with Desert Parkway that sends a team of emergency medical technicians, paramedics and a licensed social worker — instead of police or firefighters

Coming up...

The **National Alliance on Mental Illness** is holding its virtual NAMIcon 2021, “Bringing People Together for Mental Health: The Time is Now,” **July 27–28**. Visit <https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Attend-the-NAMI-National-Convention> for more information.

The **American Psychological Association** is holding its 2021 virtual convention **Aug. 12–14**. For more information, visit <https://convention.apa.org>.

— to handle 911 calls related to mental health crises. The team can transport a patient directly to Desert Parkway, whereas traditional first responders are required to first take the patient to a medical hospital. Cortez Masto, a Democrat, and Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas) announced the introduction of the Behavioral Health Crisis Services Expansion Act on June 1. Cortez Masto said the bill would provide more grant funding for the expansion of programs like the Las Vegas crisis response team, with local oversight in place to account for the different needs of each local government.

NAMES IN THE NEWS

During its online federal advocacy conference June 5, the American Psychiatric Association (APA)

conferred the highest award it gives a public servant, the Jacob K. Javits Award, to **Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman** (D-N.J.). Rep. Watson Coleman is being honored for her career record of public service on mental health, including her recent activities with the Congressional Black Caucus to prevent suicides in Black youth and her staunch support of the Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act. Each year, the APA confers the Jacob K. Javits Award to a federal and or state public servant who has made outstanding contributions to the profession of psychiatry and mental health advocacy. The APA established the award in 1986 in honor of Senator Javits, who represented New York state in the U.S. Senate from 1957 to 1981. Rep. Watson Coleman is the first Black woman to represent New Jersey in Congress. “Rep. Watson Coleman’s leadership is critical to our nation’s mental health,” said APA President Vivian Pender, M.D. “Her focus on health equities goes beyond simply funding the services that are needed, but to a wider lens of understanding how social determinants are impacting the mental health of diverse communities around the nation.”

In case you haven’t heard...

Do you bounce out of bed early in the morning ready to go, or do you hit the snooze alarm until the last possible second and drag your tired body to work? If you’re a morning lark, your natural sleep habits, or circadian rhythms, are aligned with traditional 8-to-5 work schedules and school drop-off times. But it’s a bummer if you’re a night owl, primed to perform better in the afternoon and evening and stay up late, according to a new study published June 6 in *Molecular Psychiatry* and reported on by CNN June 9. The study used sleep data gathered from wrist activity monitors worn by more than 85,000 participants of the UK Biobank Study, which houses in-depth genetic and health information on more than a half a million Brits. Researchers compared that sleep information to self-reports of mood and found that people with a misaligned sleep cycle are more likely to report depression and anxiety, and have fewer feelings of well-being. “If you’re a morning person, then you are less likely to have depression and more likely to report a higher well-being. This may in part be due to people who are morning people are less likely to have ‘social jet lag,’” explained study author Dr. Jessica Tyrrell, a senior lecturer at the University of Exeter Medical School in the United Kingdom.

Mental Health Weekly

welcomes letters to the editor from its readers on any topic in the addiction field. Letters no longer than 350 words should be submitted to:

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Letters may be edited for space or style.