

## **Re: Medicaid Coverage of Prescription Digital Therapeutics**

NAMI MD is the Maryland Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the nation's largest grassroots organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families impacted by mental health challenges through education, support and advocacy. While our primary focus is advocating for the needs of this population, we know that many individuals live with a mental health diagnosis and substance abuse disorders concurrently.

Although NAMI does not advocate for the use of a specific medication or recovery option, one of our top policy priorities is ensuring better patient access to care, including access to innovative treatments and therapies like prescription digital therapeutics (PDTs). This new treatment modality provides daily cognitive behavioral therapy and encourages patient accountability by incorporating contingency management therapy to help keep patients engaged in care. Certain PDTs have received 'breakthrough' designation from the FDA due to their unquestionable improvements in patient care retention. However, patient access to this innovative treatment is hindered due to a lack of Medicaid reimbursement.

As you know, there are more than 300,000 Marylanders served by our public behavioral health system. The pandemic has created new challenges and exacerbated old problems for those suffering from addiction. Historically, patients with SUDs have struggled with access to and retention in care. Behavioral health providers have seen a spike in care need from current patients and an influx of new individuals seeking services. The demands for services are outstripping the number of providers. PDTs help fill this gap by connecting patients to their providers without physical proximity. As part of its program design, PDTs empower patients to perform self-assessments and report their cravings and triggers to their providers, thereby facilitating connectivity and preventing relapse.

Maryland has been a leader on behavioral health for many years. The more we learn about innovative solutions like PDTs, the more it makes sense to add them as tools to our Medicaid toolbox. PDTs are designed to keep individuals engaged on their road to recovery when traditional supports such as therapy or support groups (Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous) are not available. When reimagining healthcare, we need treatments that are easily accessible for everyone.

Due to PDTs new and innovative nature, many State Medicaid and commercial payers are still wrestling with the mechanism to pay for these critically needed therapeutics. Traditionally, Medicaid covers FDA approved therapies and NAMI MD respectfully requests Maryland treat PDTs the same. It is important to make these therapeutics available to Maryland residents as soon as possible.



Kathryn S. Farinholt  
Executive Director  
NAMI Maryland

