



America's non-profits have always been on the front lines, providing essential services to the most vulnerable members of our society including seniors, veterans, adults, children and families. The massive scale of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is having a profound impact on access to care for Americans in desperate need of mental health, substance use disorder, intellectual and developmental disability and autism these services.

Non-profit providers of these services are working under extraordinarily challenging conditions to not only ensure Americans can maintain access to critical services, but simply to remain financially viable. The pandemic is pushing the financial limits for essential care providers to ensure uninterrupted access to care which is more urgent than ever before.

These non-profit service providers are being crippled by the massive economic impact of COVID-19. This unprecedented national health emergency is forcing non-profits to make hard decisions on how to continue to operate and maintain employment for hundreds of thousands of professionals - clinicians, therapists, and direct care staff – who are caring for populations who are at disproportionately high risk of COVID-19 due to the underlying conditions that often occur alongside mental illness, substance use, and intellectual and developmental disabilities.

While Congress continues to work diligently to help non-profits and businesses, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act included limitations on eligibility for the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), including limiting non-profits who employ in excess of 500 employees. Due to the 500-employee limit restriction, many non-profits who provide critical care services to vulnerable populations and provide employment and health insurance coverage for large numbers of American workers, are ineligible. This means that these entities must make hard decisions ranging from furloughs, shutting down service programs or, even closing their doors. PPP eligibility for these non-profits allows for the continued provision of essential services which help ensure vulnerable populations are able to stay in their own homes and communities in a time when hospitals are over-extended responding to the national emergency.

Ensuring the continued viability of the nation's non-profits requires immediate action from Congress. We urge Congress to modify Section 1102 (D) of the CARES Act to allow non-profits employing in excess of 500 employees and providing the following specific services to be eligible for the SBA PPP and include the following language in the next stimulus bill:

“Non-profits organizations as described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 and are exempt from taxation under section 501(a) of such Code are exempt from the size limitation on employees under Section 1102 (D)(i) and (ii) if providing mental health, substance use disorder, intellectual and developmental disability services and autism services.”



In the collective, our organizations provide indispensable services to more than 10 million people a year, providing critical mental health, substance use disorder, intellectual and developmental disability and autism services. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a ripple effect across the nation and non-profits are struggling to continue to provide essential services.

The pandemic has resulted in providers on the front lines of caring for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism losing, on average, 32% of their revenue, while simultaneously experiencing significantly increased COVID-19 overtime staffing and expenses related to personal protective equipment. These services are predominantly delivered in congregate settings and involve hands-on assistance with personal care, leaving these individuals and the providers and staff who care for them at high risk for contracting the virus. Day and employment programs for individuals with disabilities have been closed to protect participants, requiring providers of group home and in-home services to provide continuous care for clients sheltering in place during the day without adequate reimbursement. Without PPP eligibility, these essential services are in imminent danger of closure, leaving people with disabilities and their families without alternative placement options. Changes to the SBA PPP are critical to ensuring residential service providers continue to keep people safely in their communities, and day and employment programs are able to retain the staff required to re-open when social distancing restrictions are lifted.

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on the mental health of Americans, as evidenced by a staggering increase of 891% in calls to the “Disaster Distress Helpline.” Non-profits providing mental health and substance use disorder services are imperative to triaging the monumental effect of COVID-19. In a recent [Kaiser Family Foundation poll](#), nearly half (45%) of adults in the United States reported that their mental health has been negatively impacted due to worry and stress over the virus. Unfortunately, the consequences of COVID-19 threaten needed access to these invaluable services. An April 2020 survey conducted by the National Council for Behavioral Health found that nearly all (93%) of behavioral health organizations have reduced their operations, with 31% being forced to cancel, reschedule, or turn away patients. Additionally, 47 % of organizations have had to, or plan to lay off or furlough employees as a result of the pandemic. An astonishing 62% of behavioral health organizations believe they only have the financial resources to survive for three months or less. SBA PPP eligibility is imperative to ensuring sustainability for the non-profits providing desperately needed mental health and substance use disorder services – not only now, but in the aftermath of this unprecedented pandemic

The COVID-19 outbreak runs the risk of completely overwhelming the provision of non-profit mental health, substance use disorder, intellectual and developmental disability and autism services if immediate action is not taken. We urge Congress to act now to help non-profits who are providing essential services to protect our nation’s most vulnerable citizens and ensure the economic viability of these providers.