

Boulder City Council contemporaneous tweets

Nov 19 2019

Shay Castle provided these tweets

<https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1196981625248079872.html>

"Judy Amabile is talking about cuts to mental health providers who serve Medicare patients. Another story I'm working on (though I honestly hope someone smarter than me and at a bigger paper takes it up)

"We've passed a lot of Parity bills, but we apparently don't know what Parity looks like," she says.

Basically (as I understand it) Anthem is cutting the reimbursement rates it pays to mental health providers whose clients use Medicare to pay for services.

Qs from Weaver: What is it? When did it happen?

Oct. 5, a letter was sent out.

Andrew Rose, a local mental health service provider, speaking to the same thing. Serves 145 Medicaid clients.

"Imagine a 20% pay cut."

So yes, corrections to above tweets: Medicaid, not Medicare.

"My contractors don't want to work for Medicaid anymore," Rose says.

So providers (therapists, etc.) used to be compensated 100% for the cost of providing those services. Anthem is cutting it to 80%.

It's a little more complicated than that, but the essentials is that therapists are being paid less to provide the same service to Medicaid clients. Providing a disincentive to keep accepting Medicaid as a form of insurance.

"To see that cut is going to put us in jeopardy ... to keep serving the 20% poorest population," Rose says.

Weaver asking some more clarifying qs. The Medicaid administrator for the state sets recommended fees for services, but apparently insurance companies don't have to follow those for mental health services....?

Friend q: Is this impacting only part of CO? Or all of the state?

Rose: Region 6 and 7 (CO Springs and Boulder) which Anthem administers, are being impacted by this.

Apologies if this is confusing. Health care reporting is, no lie, the hardest stuff I've ever done. Well, the most complicated reporting I've ever done, to clarify.

Phillip Horne, another mental health provider, also speaking to the Medicaid reimbursement rate being cut 20%.

Already having impacts, he says. "I've already had to cut my pay. I'm back on Medicaid myself."

"I'm not sure we will continue" providing services.

Many factors make it more expensive to work with Medicaid, Horner says. It's going to lead providers to stop accepting Medicaid as an insurance. Those patients will then be forced onto the already-burdened Mental Health Partners.

"They'll wait months and, most likely, as an end result, not get care."

Dr. Ryan Burkhart: "These cuts are going to impact our community in a very negative way." Seeing a 2-3 month waiting period as-is for Medicaid patients to get into therapy, Burkhart says. That will worsen as providers stop accepting Medicaid rather than be paid less. Only qualified/certified Medicaid providers can serve patients on Medicaid. So these patients are "stuck," Burkhart says.

Heather McLaughlin, a Boulder resident and rep for social workers, also talking Medicaid cuts. They've already met with Neguse, Fenberg, Singer... getting a lot of traction.

"This is a time that you as city council members can really move that needle forward help the community achieve what it set out to do... address mental health."

The most efficient way to do that is preventative, outpatient care.

If providers "are to survive," we're going to need to have pay that enables ppl to live and work in this community and serve the Medicaid population, McLaughlin says.

References substance abuse and suicide crises in CO.

If we cut reimbursement, those crises will worsen, she argues.