



January 26, 2021

Vermont House Committee on Health Care
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: Coverage of Audio-Only Telephone Health Services

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Lynn Stanley and I am the Interim Executive Director of the National Association of Social Workers, Vermont Chapter. I am writing to express our support for the coverage of audio-only telephone health services.

When clinicians have a variety of tools available to them, they are better able to serve their clients. In our rural state, telehealth services are an invaluable mode of connecting Vermont's most vulnerable citizens with vital mental health services. Consider that many Vermonters lack access to broadband internet services at their homes or may not have a computer to use; this group includes people living in very rural areas, people living in poverty, and is also heavily weighted toward older Vermonters who, even if they have access to broadband, may be more comfortable using audio-only telehealth services. By allowing coverage for audio-only telephone health services we can greatly reduce barriers for nearly all Vermonters needing access to mental and behavioral health services.

The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty. Allowing audio-only telephone health services will assist in ensuring that clinicians can serve all Vermonters who have access to a telephone, but who may not have access to a computer, or the internet. NASW-VT urges the members of the House Committee on Health Care to support the coverage of audio-only telephone health services.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Stanley, LICSW
Interim Executive Director
NASW VT