

# AAFMT Family Team Update

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- **Family Team is AAMFT's legislative advocacy arm**
- Biggest national initiative is the Mental Health Access Improvement Act (HR [432](#) / S [828](#)) – legislation in Congress that would finally allow MFTs and MHCs to serve as Medicare-eligible providers.
  - Other initiatives are continued work on licensure portability between states
  - Helping states protect and improve licensure stability within each state.
    - We enjoy some level of licensure stability in GA that MFTs in other states do not

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- Congress is taking notice to mental health issues and this fall has started reaching out to constituents for more information and suggestions. Earlier this month, AAMFT sent a letter to the Finance Committee urging Congress to pass the Mental Health Access Improvement Act.
  - This has been AAMFT's main focus for several years and continues to be as it will improve access to mental health care for the elderly, improve access to jobs for MFTs, and support higher payments for MFTs in the future
  - Congress is still moving very slowly with this, your advocacy is important.

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- If you have not already done so, you can advocate for MFTs as Medicare providers by [sending a message](#) to your Members of Congress through AAMFT's grassroots portal urging your Members of Congress to support MFTs as Medicare providers. AAMFT has created a special [grassroots message](#) that friends and family of AAMFT members can use to send to their Members of Congress to advocate for this important information. Please contact us at [FamilyTEAM@aamft.org](mailto:FamilyTEAM@aamft.org) if you have any questions.
  - <https://www.aamft.org/takeaction#/>
  - <https://www.aamft.org/advocacy/actionweek2020>

# AAFMT Family Team Update

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- **Federal Loan Repayment Program for MFTs Accepting Applications**

- To combat many behavioral health problems, the federal government has three National Health Service Corps (NHSC) programs to help MFTs reduce their student loan debt.
- These programs are accepting applications from LMFTs and other providers through December 16, 2021.

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- **Federal Loan Repayment Program for MFTs Accepting Applications**
  - The NHSC loan repayment program awards up to \$50,000 in exchange for a two-year commitment to provide mental/behavioral health care at approved sites in high-need/underserved areas.
  - The [NHSC Substance Use Disorder Workforce Loan Repayment Program](#) provides up to \$75,000 in exchange for a three-year commitment to health care professionals who provide substance use disorder (SUD) treatment services
  - Providers in rural communities may apply to the [NHSC Rural Community Loan Repayment Program](#), which awards up to \$100,000 for three years of service.
  - For more information and to apply please visit the [NHSC LRP website](#)

# Importance of Advocacy

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- **Add YOUR Voice**
- **Intercession, pleading, supporting**
- **Commitment to Service, Advocacy and Public Participation is an ethical requirement written into the AAMFT Code of Ethics**
  - **The second paragraph of the first page of our code of ethics;**
  - **“The areas of service, advocacy, and public participation are recognized as responsibilities to the profession equal in importance to all other aspects.”**

# Importance of Advocacy

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- The most important function of GAMFT as an organization
  - Our license only continues to exist because of the legislative efforts of GAMFT to protect, defend and strengthen our license.
  - If active efforts are not made yearly to ensure MFTs are included in mental health legislation, our license and input would eventually be eliminated as unnecessary and inconsequential.
  - It was the efforts of GAMFT that ensured “diagnosis” was added to our legal scope of practice. Had this not occurred, MFTs would likely have lost the ability to bill insurance.

# Importance of Advocacy

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- It is not enough to simply protect our license, we must also work diligently to strengthen our license and broaden its scope and significance at the state level. This is done by creating laws that improve our authority and demonstrate that we are significant stake holders in the provision of mental health services in Georgia.
- We also have an obligation to advocate for improved mental health services and systems in our state
  - Just because our solo or group practice is doing well doesn't mean that GA's mental health system as a whole is working well, and we MFTs are perfectly poised to speak expertly on how to make mental health services in GA better. We must not turn a blind eye to these issues.
  - MFTs are important stakeholders in our mental health system, but for the state to take us seriously, we must assert ourselves with our voice, with our presence, with our expertise, and with our numbers.

# Importance of Advocacy

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- Advocating at the state level also ensures that MFTs that come after us not only have a strong license to practice with but also have job opportunities, particularly new opportunities we may not have had ourselves.
  - Advocacy ensures that our profession outlasts us.

# Importance of Advocacy

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- Advocacy isn't just about taking care of our clients, our license, or those therapists that come after us, it is about taking care of each other.
  - Advocacy is putting yourself at some level of inconvenience for the benefit of others in your family or system.
  - We know how easy it is to burn out, but we also know that often self-care is not enough, and sometimes impossible. Caring for others in our same situation is important to create sustainability for them and subsequently for us.
  - Contributing your time, your presence, your voice, and your money to Advocacy efforts is a service to your colleagues all across this state, many of whom you have never met, but who desperately need the relief that better jobs, better payments, and a better mental health system and legislation can provide.

# Importance of Advocacy

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- GAMFT is leading vehicle for this
  - As MFTs we operate within and support systemic and family-oriented model
  - Participation with GAMFT and our Advocacy efforts gives us opportunity to practice our clinical values in our professional setting.
  - It allows us to create a caring and safe environment for our colleagues and our profession
  - It allows us to shelter each other

# Importance of Advocacy

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- Enlist your colleagues who could not make it to this meeting
  - You can help us with your resources, but you can also help us by co-opting other MFTs who may not be aware of this great need.
  - We need more people to share the load. Many hands make light work, and it is important that we not enjoy the benefits of a few people without contributing equally ourselves.