



# Nebraska Psychiatric Society

October 2020

Mission: Nebraska Psychiatric Society exists to advance the profession of psychiatry, serve the needs of our members and provide support for psychiatric services across Nebraska.

Vision: To become a trusted voice and resource for psychiatric services in Nebraska.

## *A Message from the President: Medicaid Expansion (And Mental Health Benefits) Come to Nebraska*

Ten years ago, Congress passed the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the most significant regulatory overhaul and expansion of healthcare insurance coverage since the passage of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. Included in the ACA is the expansion of Medicaid eligibility. On October 1st, Nebraska joined 38 states in expanding Medicaid eligibility to U.S. citizens and legal residents with income up to 133% of the poverty line. NPS wants to make sure you are aware of this important insurance benefit and are sharing this information with your colleagues and patients.

Political debates aside, the evidence is clear that Medicaid expansion is good for the health of individuals, good for population health, and good for state revenues and budgets<sup>1</sup>. Regarding mental health, Medicaid expansion has all these benefits and more. Studies show that the stress of not having health insurance is a significant psychological burden to bear day-to-day—and now that we face a global pandemic and severe economic hardship, there has never been a better time for stress relief in any form.

An estimated 90,000 Nebraskans will be newly participating in Medicaid; that's 90,000 Nebraskans who will not have to fear that they are one medical

mishap away from economic catastrophe, and can re-focus mental energies on their education, their vocations, and their loved ones. Amidst our current challenges, Medicaid expansion is a welcome resource for our patients. Please help NPS get the word out on this good news.

And some more good news—NPS is pleased to introduce your new NPS Newsletter Editor, Nick Williams, D.O. Nick is currently a resident in psychiatry at Creighton and also serving as a resident representative on NPS Executive Committee. Nick brings a great perspective on our field from the new generation of psychiatrists, as well as his personal interest in writing and journalism. Welcome Dr Williams!

1 "The Effects of Medicaid Expansion under the ACA: Updated Findings from a Literature Review," Madeline Guth Rachel Garfield, and Robin Rudowitz



Martin Wetzel, M.D.



### **The Nebraska Psychiatry Newsletter**

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Authors' opinions do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Nebraska Psychiatric Society.

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### Legislative Update

The legislative session of the Nebraska Unicameral began on January 8, but its work was interrupted in March due to the pandemic. The final 17 days of the legislature's work were concluded on August 13, which did not allow time for the legislature to consider an override of any of the six bills the Governor vetoed.

As reported earlier, bills related to psychologist prescribing and a significant increase in the medical malpractice liability cap (both of which NPS opposed) did not advance out of committee. NPS also opposed an expansion of practice scope for optometrists which did not advance. Other bills of interest that NPS supported but did not survive committee were ones related to outlawing conversion therapy and firearm/suicide training.

Bills supported by NPS and passed into law under the Governor's signature included: LB149 (raised the age of tobacco and vaping product sales to 21), LB247 (adopted the Advance Mental Health Care Directives Act), LB840 (amended the Nebraska Clean Air Act to prohibit vaping in public places), LB1052 (amended the Medicaid Preferred Drug List to prohibit managed care organizations and pharmacy benefit managers from

denying coverage for antidepressants, antipsychotics, and anticonvulsants if medically necessary), LB1124 (adopted the Opioid Prevention and Treatment Act), and LB1140/1141/1188 (legislative oversight of and operational changes at the Youth Residential Treatment Centers, e.g. at Kearney).

Also passed into law and of general interest were LB924 (changed provisions related to racial profiling and requirements for law enforcement training) and LB1107 (a compromise budgetary package which included \$375 million in new property tax relief, a new business development tax incentive program, and a pledge of \$300 million in state funding support for a proposed \$2.6 billion UNMC project if the federal government selects the Omaha campus as the site of a new national pandemic response center).

Additional information about specific bills or laws from this legislative session can be accessed via the search function at [nebraskalegislature.gov](http://nebraskalegislature.gov).

We need to remain vigilant in monitoring and responding to bills of interest to our patients and our profession, and I invite comments and welcome your participation in the legislative process.



**Beth Ann Brooks, M.D.**

### Ethics Update

NPS members with questions regarding ethics issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic may contact the APA Ethics Committee at [apaethics@psych.org](mailto:apaethics@psych.org). The Committee responds to individual questions about the pandemic or any other matter. APA Ethics opinions about COVID-related issues are posted at <https://www.psychiatry.org/File%20Library/Psychiatrists/Practice/Ethics/APA-COVID-19-Ethics-Opinions.pdf>.

Respectfully submitted,  
Beth Ann Brooks, M.D., M.S.A.  
Legislative and Ethics Committee  
Chairperson

## **LifeBridge Nebraska Physician Wellness Program**

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All Nebraska physicians are now eligible for a groundbreaking coaching program offered by the Nebraska Medical Association available to any Nebraska physicians, not just NMA members. Per the NMA, "Confidential appointments are self-referred without medical diagnoses, insurance billing, or electronic records. Notification is not given to employers, NMA, or the board of medicine. Program participants can expect com-

plete confidentiality –information and/or identity is never disclosed to others without written consent. From work/life balance to litigation, family stressors and difficult patients or colleagues, whatever the issue—LifeBridge Nebraska's physician peer coaches provide a safe harbor while helping to reclaim career and personal life satisfaction.

Physicians can connect with LifeBridge Nebraska by calling a confidential third-party call center at 1-888-569-2036. To learn more and to view coach profiles, please visit [nebmed.org/lifebridge](http://nebmed.org/lifebridge)."

For more information, please contact Amy Reynoldson, NMA Executive Vice President, at 402-474-4472 or [amy@nebmed](mailto:amy@nebmed).

## ***"VA Prescribing Pilot Rejected"***

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An experimental pilot program that would allow clinical psychologists to prescribe and manage medications within the Veteran's Health Administration system was removed from consideration by the Veteran's Affairs Committee. The program, if not removed, would have been part of either S.785 or the Veterans Compact Act of 2020, both of which were introduced to the U.S. House floor on Thursday, September 17. Dr. Saul Levin, CEO and Medical Director of the American Psychiatric

Association, in an email addressed to APA, credited "every APA member who reached out to their member of Congress." The above two pieces of legislation have been part of a movement to address suicide among veterans, but the pilot program was opposed by the APA and the American Medical Association, and was questioned by Veterans of Foreign Wars, Disabled American Veterans, and the Kennedy Forum. Efforts to improve mental health in the veteran population will continue, but

the removal of the pilot program from the legislation was a decisive victory for the psychiatric community, which has expressed grave patient-safety concerns with allowing psychologists without formal medical training to prescribe and manage medications. Dr. Levin hailed the news as a decision that will "help ensure that our nation's Veterans receive the best possible mental health care within the Veterans Administration health system."

## ***Creighton Psychiatry Residency Class of 2024***

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### **Nicholas DiStefano, MD**



Dr. DiStefano was born and raised in Omaha, NE. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry from Rockhurst University, and medical degree from Creighton University. During medical school, he was involved in student government as the Vice President of his class and volunteered at the student-run free clinic, the Magis Clinic. He is particularly interested in Inpatient/Consult-Liaison Psychiatry, and after graduation, hopes to split his time between inpatient and outpatient while also teaching. In his free time, he enjoys spending time outdoors with his wife and their black lab. He loves anything outdoors, especially hunting, fishing, hiking and camping. Additionally, he enjoys golfing, trying new restaurants, and grilling/smoking foods.

### **Brooke Gertz, MD**



Dr. Gertz was born and raised in Marysville, Ohio. She earned her Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Notre Dame and then her medical degree from the University of Cincinnati, where she met her husband, who is joining her in Omaha as an orthopedic surgery resident. During medical school, she was involved in youth and undergraduate mentoring and women's health research and education. She is currently interested in child and adolescent psychiatry, especially in the inpatient setting. In her free time, she enjoys reading fiction, running with her husband, attending church events, and watching sports.

*Continued on page 4.*

**Check out the NPS Website**  
**[www.nebraskapsych.org](http://www.nebraskapsych.org)**

**Bransen Guild, DO**



Dr. Guild was born in Denver, CO, but raised in Fort Collins, CO, where he attended high school and undergraduate at Colorado State University. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from CSU, earning his B.S. in Biomedical Science, and then attended medical school at Rocky Vista University in Parker, CO. During his clinical clerkships, he acquired an interest in psychiatry with a special enthusiasm for child and adolescent psychiatry. He earned his medical degree from RVU, graduating with honors. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his wife and getting outdoors. His hobbies include mountain biking, camping, automobile maintenance, and video games.

**Abigail Jaeger, MD**



Dr. Jaeger was born and raised in Omaha, NE. She attended Grinnell College in Iowa, where she earned a bachelor's in biology. While at Grinnell, she played on the soccer and basketball teams. After graduation, Abigail spent time as an AmeriCorps member working with high school juniors, focusing on ACT and college preparation. She also worked in a retinal specialty clinic and as an EMT. Dr. Jaeger attended Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University and was drawn to the field of psychiatry. In her free time, she enjoys running, golf, trivia, board games, and exploring new restaurants. She also enjoys hanging out with her cat, Gilbert Grape.

**Mark Mullen, MD**



Dr. Mullen was born and raised in St. Louis, MO. He received his bachelor's degree from Spring Hill College, a Jesuit school in Mobile, Alabama. He then returned home for medical school at Saint Louis University, where he was involved with the AAMC's Organization of Student Representatives. He is interested in medical education and exploring how systems can continually evolve to meet the ever-changing needs of trainees—from curriculum development to admission and retention. He has fostered an interest in psychiatry since beginning undergraduate studies. During his psychiatry clerkship, he felt he had discovered his vocation. He prioritizes spending time with family and friends and is always on the market for a good podcast.

**Phil Ryan, MD**



Dr. Ryan was born and raised in Le Mars, Iowa. He attended the University of Iowa, where he studied Integrative Physiology and Global Health Studies. After college, he spent the next 6 years managing group homes for people with autism and intellectual disability. He attended medical school at the University of Iowa where he quickly developed a passion for psychiatry and working with underserved and marginalized populations. In his free time, Phil enjoys socializing with friends and family, enjoying the outdoors, attending concerts, and cheering on the Iowa Hawkeyes.

### Andi Ngo, MD



“After returning home to humid, expensive Hawaii for medical school, I found myself longing for the red autumns and white winters of Omaha once more. When I was given the opportunity to interview at UNMC, I immediately booked my flight. Their genuine commitment to well-being and education shone through every conversation I had with each member of the team. The idea of spearheading a new residency program with experienced and esteemed faculty further enticed me to return! By the time I’m done with my training, I’ll have ten years of Omaha under my belt, and I’m sure I’ll be adding onto that belt several more notches!”

### Michaelyn Everhart, MD



“Being born and raised in Kansas, I have a deep love for the Midwest. I had visited Omaha several times prior to residency, and I was always impressed by the wide array of local restaurants and the local music scene. When I interviewed at UNMC, I knew it was the place I wanted to be. I felt this would be a program where my wellness would be put up front, so I could focus on learning how to be the best care giver I can be.”

### Emily Royer, MD



“We are staying in Omaha for training as this is an amazing city with a unique blend of affordable, safe, and family friendly while still being exciting, entertaining, and innovative. As a student, I already recognized the exceptional leadership in our Psychiatry Department as I watched them rapidly expand and bring the WISE principles to life. I am excited about the immense opportunities to engage with our supportive faculty and grow alongside my awesome co-residents!”

### Matthew Kelly, MD



“I am a Nebraska native with a love of music, outdoor activities, and traveling to new places. I entered medical school intending to pursue a career in primary care but ultimately developed a passion for psychiatry, and I feel privileged to serve our patients and community. After graduating UNMC in 2015, I spent four years working as a U.S. Navy flight surgeon and caring for the men and women serving our great country. I ultimately chose to return to Omaha to complete my psychiatry training because of the wonderful people here, the affordable cost of living, and the robust cultural scene. Nebraska Medicine is an institution which prioritizes patient-centered care and resident wellness, and I am grateful to train here under so many fantastic mentors and compassionate clinicians.”



## 2020 NPS Executive Committee Official Ballot

The Nebraska Psychiatric Society Executive Board  
would like to have your vote for:

### Assembly Representative

Click [HERE](#) to vote online or feel free to scan/fax this page in to cast your vote.

- Alena Balasanova, MD
- Write in: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to:

7906 Davenport Street  
Omaha, NE 68114

or

Fax to:

(402) 393-7391

**DEADLINE: Vote must be received by November 1st**