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# ADVOCACY AGENDA 2021

ACCESS TO CARE • HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM • PRIMARY CARE INTEGRATION

## I. ACCESS TO CARE

Treatments provided by Acupuncturists are California Essential Health Benefits.

Licensed Acupuncturists' (L.Ac.s) provide essential health care services as California designated primary care providers serving Medicare, Medi-Cal, Department of Industrial Relations Workman's Compensation System, Veteran's Administration (VA) and Affordable Care Act (ACA) patients as acupuncture has "Essential Health Benefit" designation.

L.Ac.s are certified in infection control protocols and are following the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) *Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations for Healthcare Personnel During the Coronavirus Disease Pandemic*.

**A.** Acupuncturists should be identified as Essential Workers and be allowed to be part of Governor Newsom's California Health Corps. The California Acupuncture Board (CAB) requires L.Ac.s to have infection control certification in Clean Needle Technique (CNT) with standards set by the Council of Colleges of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (CCAOM) including: proper cleanliness, patient safety, infectious control, bloodborne pathogens, non-bloodborne pathogens, handwashing, instrument cleaning, as well as cleaning and disinfecting environmental services in health care facilities, and having an exposure control plan (ECP) to eliminate or minimize employee exposure incidence. CCAOM added additional COVID-19 acupuncture specific protocols based on the CDC's recommendations that L.Ac.s are implementing to protect patients.

**B.** Acupuncturists providing non-needling services such as evaluation and management services, nutrition counseling, therapeutic exercise and instructions should be able to provide services utilizing Telehealth systems and services.

## II. HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM

Services provided by an Acupuncturist are inconsistently covered and reimbursed in public and private health insurance programs. Medicare covers acupuncture treatment for chronic low back pain. Medi-Cal covers acupuncture treatment.

All services provided by Acupuncturists are allowed by the VA with national certification and are to be covered by the VA's medical benefits package including needling, exams and physical therapy modalities. L.Ac.s work in VA Medical Centers (VAMC) and private practice Acupuncturists treat VA patients in their private clinics. While VAMC's are essential medical facilities, L.Ac.s need to be listed as Essential Workers to ensure that veterans can continue to receive care if they choose a non-VAMC acupuncture clinic.

Most states (47) in the nation have adopted the national exam which establishes national standards which aligns Acupuncturists with the gold standard of professional competency as is seen with most other health care practitioners. National board certification is the hallmark of excellence in acupuncture and traditional medicine.

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## II. HEALTH CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM (CONTINUED)

National certification makes an important statement about professional competence that is recognized by regulatory bodies, third-party payers, the profession and the public including the CAB in their letter to the Legislature (2016) requesting legislative authority to adopt the national exam.

**A.** All services covered under L.Ac. license type must be included in all public and commercial health insurance plans to ensure all individuals can access these services.

**B.** All services covered under L.Ac. license type must be reimbursed by all public and commercial health insurance plans at appropriate rates to ensure access to services and practitioner solvency. Reimbursements must include all needling, exam and therapy services allowed under the license type with further expansion to covered diagnosis.

**C.** California must adopt the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) exams to ensure practitioners are eligible to provide services in all public and commercial health insurance plans.

## III. PRIMARY CARE INTEGRATION

Licensed acupuncturists are primary care providers in California.

Acupuncture needling is the stimulation of a certain point or points on or near the surface of the body by the insertion of needles to prevent or modify the perception of pain or to normalize physiological functions, including pain control, for the treatment of certain diseases or dysfunctions of the body. Licensing includes the techniques of electroacupuncture, cupping, moxibustion, herbal medicine, and other modalities listed in the Acupuncture License Act. The CAB issues a license to practice acupuncture to any person who completes an approved educational and training program that offers a curriculum that includes at least 3,000 hours of which at least 2,050 hours are didactic and laboratory training and at least 950 hours are supervised clinical instruction.

In addition, individuals must satisfactorily complete a tutorial program in the practice of an Acupuncturist that is approved by the board, pass a written examination administered by the board that tests the applicant's ability, competency and knowledge in the practice of an Acupuncturist and complete a clinical internship training program approved by the board.

No other individual shall offer to provide or represent that they are qualified to provide any acupuncture related treatment that they are not qualified to perform by their professional education or advanced post professional study that falls within the Acupuncture License Act of California.

Unlicensed individuals providing acupuncture related treatment represents a potential public safety danger to Californians and are not trained to administer acupuncture safely and effectively.

**A.** California must protect and ensure a comprehensive Acupuncture License Act to ensure patients' access to all available acupuncture related services through Acupuncturists licensed by the CAB.

## ABOUT CSOMA

CSOMA is a professional association of licensed acupuncturists and supporters of acupuncture, dedicated to the preservation, advancement and integration of the art, science and practice of all branches of acupuncture medicine into the modern health care model, in a caring and ethical manner, thereby enhancing the health and well-being of the general public.

CSOMA is focused on ensuring individuals have access to all services provided by Licensed Acupuncturists (L.Ac.s), that these services are integrated into the health care delivery system and that the over 12,000 Acupuncturists in the state and their services are a vital part of primary care throughout California's public and private health insurance programs.

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