



## COVID-19 SPECIAL EDITION

### Summit Will Pivot to Virtual Event in Light of COVID-19

*Updated information about the April 29 virtual Summit will be coming soon!*

Remaining calm and responsibly continuing our work during a world health emergency like COVID-19 is an extraordinary challenge. The urgency of mobilizing employers to improve mental health care and outcomes will heighten, not lessen, in light of anxiety-producing pandemic news.

That's why we would like to thank our speakers, sponsors and attendees for their continued commitment to and interest in the Minnesota Health Action Group's [2020 Annual Employer Leadership Summit](#).

This year's Summit, ***The Path Forward: Employers Driving Improved Mental Health Care and Outcomes***, focuses on mental health, identified as a top strategic priority by Minnesota employers.

In light of COVID-19, we will hold the meeting in an interactive virtual environment to ensure the high-value and engaging Summit experience you've come to expect, while protecting health and safety. **REGISTRATION IS OPEN AND ALL ATTENDEES MAY ATTEND AT EARLY BIRD RATES!** Simply click on the register button below.

Esteemed speakers, panelists and innovators will share their vision for The Path Forward for Mental Health, including insights into easing COVID-19 fears. In fact, the current state of mental health and substance use treatment in America is already dire — and getting worse. ***Let's take this time to work together and begin reversing the trend at this critical time.***



Renowned mental health advocate, activist and founder of [The Kennedy Forum](#), [former U.S. Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy](#), is the dynamic and compelling Summit keynote speaker.

***"We ignore the mental health consequences of the coronavirus crisis at our peril. Not only is this a matter of preventing panic, it's about reducing psychological harm, including post-traumatic stress, which has a lasting impact."***

***Patrick J. Kennedy in a letter to world health leaders and signed by 40+ health advocacy organizations***

DIAMOND



GOLD



SILVER



BRONZE



## How are Employers Responding to COVID-19?

Over the weekend of March 14, The Action Group gathered information from a select group of large employers to understand how they are responding to the current emergency situation. In general, employers are investing considerable time and energy and working closely with health plans and other vendors to do the right thing for their businesses and employees. Here is a high-level recap.

- **What are benefits managers hearing from employees?**
  - What they are hearing mirrors the concerns reported in the media, with a special focus on impact to the workplace. Examples of questions include: Working from home; interacting with others; understanding the facts; child care and food security, and more.
- **What are employers experiencing with health plans?**
  - Employers are working closely with health plans to learn more about testing, when to seek medical care, and vendor support. (View the Minnesota Department of Commerce letter to carriers [here](#).)
- **How are health plans and vendors working together?**
  - Health plans are working with employers to offer the same benefits provided to their fully insured clients. At this time, the following enhanced benefits are generally available, or under consideration:
    - Cover testing at no cost.
    - Provide access to treatment, when



**PLEASE PARTICIPATE:**

Employers across the nation are being asked to participate in this [COVID-19 PULSE OF THE PURCHASER SURVEY](#).

**SURVEY CLOSING FRIDAY, MARCH 20**

For a curated set of COVID-19 employer resources, including an employer town hall webinar, click [here](#).

- needed, at limited/no cost sharing for in-network providers.
  - Promote/expand access/eliminate barriers to telemedicine to ensure safe access to care.
  - **Where is there still work to be done?**
    - Because we are relatively early in the response, the following areas are still being considered:
      - Addressing network adequacy issues, if any, especially access to testing.
      - Accommodating employee needs for medication refills (including early refills).
  - **How are proactive communications being provided to employers and employees?**
    - Benefit vendors are in close communication with employers. Within businesses/employers, there are significant internal communications at the executive level and with employees and managers.
  - **What, if anything, are employers doing to address the mental health needs of employees and families during the emergency?**
    - Employers are reminding people of the employee assistance program (EAP) and other available services.
  - **What are employer concerns/needs (barriers to break down, information/resources needed, etc.) in responding to the emergency?**
    - Key concerns identified include responsiveness and capacity of services to meet public needs, as well as staying on top of evolving guidance.
  - **What other benefits/policies/practices have employers put in place?**
    - Employers are implementing an array of policies and practices to support the business and employees, including remote work, elimination of unnecessary business travel, social distancing, cleaning/disinfecting protocols.
    - Review of, and changes to, pay practices is also a focus (if areas of the business will be affected by reduced hours or closure).
    - Some organizations are considering additional financial support needed by employees (401(k) loans, or emergency financial support, without penalty).
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## From the **CAPITOL**

### **Governor Walz Launches, Updates Guidance for all Minnesotans**

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the lives and routines of Minnesotans, which now includes short-term changes to how state government operates. View the State of Minnesota COVID-19 page [here](#).

**March 10:** Governor Tim Walz signs into law nearly \$21 million in funding for the state's initial planning and response to the COVID-19 outbreak.



Click on the image above to view the

**March 13:** Governor Walz signs executive order 20-01 declaring a peacetime state of emergency in response to the spread of COVID-19 within Minnesota.

**March 17:** The Legislature passes an additional \$200 million funding package for health care providers to help prepare for the influx of COVID-19 patients.

**March 16-April 14:** The Legislature will meet in floor and committee sessions on an as-necessary basis only, with just consensus items being taken up on the House and Senate floors during that time.

The immediate time and attention of policy makers will focus on public health and necessary disease-response legislation. Leaders will prioritize three categories of legislation:

- Items related to COVID-19
- Proposals considered "mission critical" such as a capital bonding bill
- Bills that have bipartisan support in the House and Senate.

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## One-Hour Access to Mental Health Care Helps Manage COVID-19 Fears

A [new partnership](#) between the The Action Group and AiRCare Health opens the door for employees to receive mental health care in **one hour**, not the usual days, weeks or months. As COVID-19 fears threaten to become panic, it's critical to shore up employee mental health resources to ensure prompt access to vital services.

Companies in Minnesota that implement the [AiRCare](#) solution through this first-of-its-kind partnership will have access to information about mental health care and benefits across the state. Data will be used to raise the bar on the care experience for individuals and families while improving outcomes and costs.

View the press release [here](#). For more information about offering this promising solution to your employees, please contact [Deb Krause](#).



Click on either image above to learn more about this unique partnership.



- [Starbucks to Offer Therapy Sessions to Employees](#) (*Human Resource Executive*, March 16, 2020)
- [Groups Urge Administration to Consider Mental Health as Coronavirus Response Develops](#) (The Kennedy Forum, March 5, 2020)
- [Telepsychiatry and COVID-19](#) (American Psychiatric Association, March 6, 2020)

***"While this is the first pandemic caused as a result of coronavirus, it is also the first pandemic that can be controlled."***

***Dr. Tedros Adhanom  
World Health Organization Director General***

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The Minnesota Health Action Group is a coalition of public and private purchasers whose sole purpose is to represent the collective voice of those who pay the bills for health care in Minnesota. Action Group members collaborate with community stakeholders to drive innovations that support high-quality health care, create engaged consumers, and ensure the economic vitality of all Minnesota communities. Based in Bloomington, MN, the Minnesota Health Action Group was formed in 1988 as the Buyers Health Care Action Group. To learn more, visit [www.mnhealthactiongroup.org](http://www.mnhealthactiongroup.org). Follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter: @actiongroupmn