



June 2026 Advocacy & Legislative Update

Introduction

ATRA's advocacy activities are focused on bills, actions, or issues that directly impact the profession of recreational therapy or people with disabilities. ATRA responds to issues in a non-partisan manner to advocate and protect the recreational therapy profession and people served by recreational therapists.

Action Alerts - Please Take Action!

1. ATRA Action Alert issued June 27 on the [U.S. Department of Justice memo informing states that there is no legal requirement to provide home and community based services](#), rather than institutional care, for people with disabilities and older adults. Be sure to contact your federal legislators to express your concern. The Action Alert provides information on how to reach your legislators and provides a sample email for your use.
2. Reminder: Please take 10 minutes to complete the [Current Procedural Terminology coding survey](#) developed by the ATRA CPT Work Group. This Work Group is exploring the current use and knowledge of recreational therapists on CPT codes and billing practices. The survey will inform the work of this group as we explore the need for recreational therapy specific coding. The survey will only be available until the end of July.
3. Please use the [Home and Community Based Services \(HCBS\) tracker](#) to document the impact of changes to HCBS. It is important to contribute to this tracker especially if your clients are experiencing a negative impact so that advocacy efforts can provide examples of what is happening.

Advocacy Activities

- | Reviewed federal documents, coalition materials, and advocacy groups information on the Department of Education moving the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services to the Department of Health and Human Services and the Office of Civil Rights to the Department of Justice
- | Reviewed Notice regarding provisions of the 2024 Nondiscrimination in Health Programs and Activities Final Rule
- | Reviewed Federal Register notice regarding Postal Services and Ballot Mail for Federal Elections
- | Reviewed Health and Human Services Request for comments on chronic disease of addiction
- | Continued work on ATRA's Advocacy Framework and policies
- | Posted on [ATRA Connect](#) Advocacy & Legislative page on the Action Alert to contact legislators about Home and Community-Based Services and the Department of Justice's memo; ATRA's sign on to letter regarding DOE moving OSER to HHS and OCR to DOJ; webinar on HCBS waiver and working families tax cut legislation; funding opportunity for National Chronic Disease Self-Management Education Resource Center; webinar from ACL for caregivers and AI; National Call-In Day to oppose DOE actions regarding the OSER; Medicaid work requirements; SAMSHA announcement regarding 10 new states in demo project
- | Posted on ATRA Connect [Special Interest Group main page](#) on AARP report on family caregivers; Circles of Care – HCBS supports for people of color with disabilities leaving institutional settings
- | Posted on ATRA Connect [Behavioral Health Special Interest Group](#) on SAMSHA funding opportunities related to addiction and substance use



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Advocacy Activities Cont.

| Posted on ATRA Connect [Higher Education](#) on the federal grant process changes; proposed changes to uniform guidance and impact on undergraduate research

| Posted on ATRA Connect [Older Adult Special Interest Group](#) on funding from ACL to support family caregivers; HHS announcement about federal elder justice action plan; presentation on honoring the care preferences of older adults; webinar on services for people with dementia and their caregivers

Meetings

| Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities Autism and Development Disabilities Task Force Meeting

What We Are Watching

| Medicaid work requirements – [Rules issued June 1, 2026](#) will go into effect January 1, 2027. A lawsuit was filed in June in which 25 states and the District of Columbia sued to block the rule. The new Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) rule requires that most adults 19-64 who receive Medicaid must complete 80 hours/month of qualifying activities such as working a job, volunteering, completing job training, pursuing education, and/or volunteering. Individuals may also qualify by earning at least the minimum of 80 hours of work at the federal minimum wage. Furthermore, the definition of the “medical frailty” exemption was changed requiring additional burden of proof on people with disabilities, chronic conditions, and other serious health issues. See [American Association of People with Disabilities FAQ](#) for more specifics.

| Changes to the “[Guidance for Federal Financial Assistance](#)” released by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) regarding changes to grant-making agencies and recipients that go into effect October 1, 2026. This will significantly change who federal agencies administer grants.

| Graduate education student loans. Litigation is ongoing regarding the proposed changes including the definition of “professional” education as it relates to various professions.

| Federal budget proposals that significantly cut domestic programs

| Section 504 Rehabilitation Act lawsuit

| Medicaid changes at the state level

| The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) support for [community-based mental health and substance abuse programs](#)

| Social Prescribing

| Response to ATRA’s comments on Medicare Prospective Payment Systems’ request for comments on hospice, inpatient psychiatric facilities (IPF), inpatient rehabilitation facilities (IRF), and skilled nursing facilities (SNF).

Thank You

Thank you to Lizzie Terry (CCD) for representing ATRA at coalition meetings.



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Sign On Letters During June

| National Disability, Civil Rights, and Education Organizations letter denouncing the Department of Education's travel of core functions for students with disabilities

| Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities (CCD) letter to Congressional leaders to exclude any funding cuts or harmful changes to Medicaid in budget reconciliation

| Disability & Rehabilitation Research Coalition (DRRC) letter of concern to HHS and Administration for Community Living (ACL) regarding the significant delay in the release of funding opportunity for the National Paralysis Resource Center

| Coalition to Preserve Rehabilitation (CPR) letter regarding Medicare Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility Prospective Payment System Updates for Fiscal Year 2026

Stay Connected

| Follow ATRA on Social Media (Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn) @ATRAinAction

| Join the conversation and stay current on timely advocacy and legislative issues on our ATRA Connect Advocacy & Legislative page

| Visit the Advocacy page on ATRA's website for official ATRA communications and advocacy resources

ATRA Advocates for You

ATRA is the only national organization representing the specific needs and interests of all recreational therapists. ATRA envisions a world where all people have access to recreational therapy. To make that vision a reality, it is essential for recreational therapists to be recognized and valued in federal, state, and local governments. ATRA is devoted to promoting and supporting the recreational therapy profession through our strategic advocacy efforts, which ensure that lawmakers and other influential organizations are aware of recreational therapy's vital services.

You are ATRA and this is ATRA in Action.



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