



NCCAOM Advocacy Update - March 2021

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The NCCAOM® Advocacy team represents NCCAOM certification, Diplomates, and stakeholders by providing information to promote acupuncture services to state and federal policymakers, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), as well as other stakeholder groups.

Advocacy News

The National Institutes of Health's (NIH) National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) 2021-2025 Strategic Plan

The NCCIH recently opened its [2021-2025 Draft Strategic Plan](#) for public comment. The NCCAOM worked with the American Society of Acupuncturists (ASA) to submit feedback on the strategic plan draft. Read these comments on [the NCCAOM Advocacy Page](#).

HHS and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Welcome Letters

In February 2021, the NCCAOM and the ASA sent welcome letters to the following acting secretaries within President Biden's Administration:

- [Acting HHS Secretary, Norris Cochran](#)
- [Acting Assistant Secretary for Health, Felicia Collins](#)
- [Acting Assistant Secretary for SAMHSA, Tom Coderre.](#)

By way of welcome, the letters provided a primer on the acupuncture profession's evidence base, growth, access barriers, and role in substance abuse. The NCCAOM and



the ASA will continue to work to educate HHS officials and look for ways to remove access barriers to qualified acupuncturists.

Advocacy Updates

COVID-19 Response and Advocacy

The NCCAOM continues to monitor policy resulting from the ongoing pandemic and inform its Diplomates about programs and opportunities applicable to acupuncturists. These include federal COVID-19 stimulus measures, small-business relief opportunities, and state and federal pandemic and unemployment insurance.

In December 2020, the NCCAOM and the ASA hosted a year-end [Town Hall](#) to provide an update on Medicare advocacy efforts, introduce the [NCCAOM-ASA roadmap](#) to obtain Medicare recognition, and provide an update on COVID-19 relief legislation.

March 2021

The American Rescue Plan, signed into law on March 11, 2021, provides \$1.9 trillion in COVID-19 relief that includes new stimulus provisions and extends several 2020 CARES Act provisions. Some of the ARP provisions include direct payments to eligible Americans, child-tax credits, unemployment assistance, and small-business funds. The NCCAOM Advocacy team provided ARP [guidance](#) to all Diplomates on March 12.

December 2020 – February 2021

The [NCCAOM COVID-19 Resource Page](#) includes background and guidance on these provisions, and provides information on updated, modified, and new opportunities for acupuncturists. New Diplomate resources include:

- [2020 Year-End COVID-19 Stimulus Guidance](#)
- [Mixed-Earner Unemployment Program Information](#)
- [Special Application Period for the Paycheck Protection Program Information](#)

CMS Recognition – Developments and Next Steps for Advocacy



CMS recognition is a key component of the NCCAOM's efforts to increase access to certified acupuncturist, acupuncture services, and those who would benefit from acupuncture. To do so, the NCCAOM and the ASA continue to advocate for recognition of acupuncture services and qualified acupuncturists among federal entities such as Medicare, the Veterans Health Administration, and the Department of Defense.

In early 2020, CMS announced that it would cover acupuncture services for chronic lower back pain (CLBP). While a significant step for the profession, as non-recognized Medicare providers, most acupuncturists have not been able to provide CLBP services to Medicare providers. Thus, a key part of the NCCAOM advocacy strategy is to obtain Medicare provider status for qualified acupuncturists.

Obtaining Medicare recognition requires an act of Congress to instruct CMS to add acupuncturists as a recognized provider. The NCCAOM and the ASA continue to work with members of Congress on this effort and hope to see finalized bill language soon.

In 2020, the NCCAOM and ASA developed a series of resources to help educate the profession on Medicare recognition and the [steps required for Medicare provider status](#). Read more about how Medicare provider status would affect the profession by visiting the [NCCAOM's Advocacy Page](#).

Stay tuned for more updates on next steps for obtaining Medicare recognition. Contact the NCCAOM Advocacy team with any Medicare-related questions at advocacy@thenccaom.org.

CMS 2021 Physician Fee Schedule Acupuncture Coding Valuation

In October 2020, the NCCAOM submitted comments opposing CMS's proposal to changes to work relative value units for four acupuncture codes in accordance with existing dry-needling codes. The [NCCAOM's letter](#) cited the codes' complexities compared to other procedure codes. In November 2020, CMS [announced](#) that it would not crosswalk these codes, citing reasons provided in the NCCAOM letter.

Read more about the NCCAOM's advocacy efforts at the [NCCAOM Advocacy Page](#). Please contact the [NCCAOM Advocacy team](#) with any questions regarding the NCCAOM's Advocacy efforts and ways to get involved.