

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UHLC Health Law & Policy Institute teams up with Connect2Health^{FCC} task force at May 18 conference to discuss how broadband technology can help improve mental health care

Goal of nationwide effort is to bring the benefits of broadband-enabled health care technology and other services to rural and underserved areas.

May 4, 2016 – The University of Houston Law Center’s Health Law & Policy Institute is partnering with the Federal Communications Commission’s Connect2Health Task Force to host a daylong conference on May 18 to explore the future of broadband technologies in the diagnosis and treatment of mental and behavioral health issues.

The conference, “Broadband Prescriptions for Mental Health,” is part of the Connect2Health^{FCC} Task Force’s “Beyond the Beltway Series.” The Law Center-hosted event coincides with National Mental Health Awareness Month in May.

A live video stream of the event will also be available [here](#).

FCC’s Connect2Health Task Force is traveling the country to gather data on how communities are leveraging broadband technologies and next-generation communications services to improve access to health care, especially in rural and underserved areas. The Law Center conference will spotlight the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine’s efforts in this area.

“It is important to discuss the legal and regulatory issues surrounding mental health care using broadband technology,” said Research Professor Allison Winnike, director of research for the Health Law & Policy Institute. “Broadband health care technology offers opportunities to increase mental health care access and improve health outcomes, which is important in a state like Texas which has a shortage of mental health professionals as well as vast rural areas.

“Increased utilization of broadband technology to deliver mental health care to those who otherwise would have no access to care could have a transformative impact on those patients.

In health care, patient safety and privacy are of the utmost concern, so it is imperative to maintain standards of high-quality care as we utilize technology to improve access to care.”

“This conference is about the transformative power of broadband in connecting everyone – especially our Nation’s veterans, people with disabilities and rural consumers alike -- to the people, services and information they need to get well and stay healthy,” said P. Michele Ellison, chair of the Connect2HealthFCC Task Force. “We’re looking forward to highlighting how broadband can be leveraged to expand access to mental and behavioral health services in Texas and beyond.”

Conference speakers will include FCC Commissioner Mignon Clyburn; University of Houston Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes; Dr. Bernard A. Harris, Jr., a former astronaut and CEO of Vesalius Ventures; Dr. Francisco Fernandez, dean of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine; Dr. Robert C. Robbins, president and CEO of the Texas Medical Center; Texas state Rep. Garnet F. Coleman; Dr. Lex Frieden, professor at the UT Health School of Biomedical Informatics; Mari Robinson, executive director of the Texas Medical Board; Dr. David Persse, City of Houston EMS Physician Director/Public Health Authority; and the Connect2Health^{FCC} Task Force, among others.

Topics will address policy and regulatory issues associated with broadband-enabled mental health care, the impact of connected environments on behavioral health and social isolation, cutting-edge applications in telepsychiatry, and other related subjects. There will also be demonstrations of latest technologies.

The conference will be from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 18, in Room 109 of the Bates Law Building at the University of Houston Law Center, 4604 Calhoun Road.

For program and logistics questions, contact Allison Winnike at anwinnik@Central.UH.EDU or Roger Goldblatt at Roger.Goldblatt@fcc.gov. An agenda, providing additional details, will be

released at a later date. Details and a registration form also will be posted at law.uh.edu/fcchealth.

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About the University of Houston

The [University of Houston](http://www.uh.edu) is a Carnegie-designated Tier One public research university recognized by The Princeton Review as one of the nation's best colleges for undergraduate education. UH serves the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. Located in the nation's fourth-largest city, UH serves more than 42,700 students in the most ethnically and culturally diverse region in the country.

About the University of Houston Law Center

The [University of Houston Law Center](http://www.uh.edu/law) is the leading law school in the nation's fourth-largest city. Founded in 1947, it is a top-tier institution awarding Doctor of Jurisprudence (J.D.) and Master of Laws (LL.M.) degrees. The Law Center is fully accredited by the American Bar Association and is a member of the Association of American Law Schools.

About the Health Law & Policy Institute

Founded in 1978, the [Health Law & Policy Institute](http://www.uh.edu/law/health-law-policy) at the University of Houston Law Center is one of the oldest and most renowned in the country. The Health Law program is consistently ranked among the nation's Top 10, by U.S. News & World Report. The University of Houston is a member institution of the Texas Medical Center, which gives the Health Law & Policy Institute a formal link to the world's largest complex for healthcare and biomedical innovation. On campus, the Institute directs curriculum, teaching, research, publications, and conference activities relating to health law and policy.

About the ConnectHealthFCC Task Force

Connect2HealthFCC is a senior-level, multi-disciplinary Task Force created by Federal Communications Commission Chairman Tom Wheeler to move the needle on broadband and advanced health care technologies. The vision of the Task Force is "everyone connected...to the people, services and information they need to get well and stay healthy." [The Task Force's "Beyond the Beltway Series"](#) aims to reach out broadly about the transformative power of

broadband technologies and next-generation communications services to improve access to health and care services throughout the country, especially in rural and underserved areas. For more information, visit [fcc.gov/health](https://www.fcc.gov/health).