



Sent: Wednesday, April 11, 2007

Subject: **BCD NewsFlash - Action Alert (Mental Health Parity Act)**

Dear Colleague,

A few weeks ago, the Center for Clinical Social Work sent you information about the Mental Health Parity Act of 2007 (SB 558) introduced in the U.S. Senate. Since that time, a version has been introduced in the House by Reps. Patrick Kennedy and Jim Ramstad (HR 1424, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007).

Both bills seek to end discrimination against people with mental disorders by requiring insurers and employers to provide equivalent coverage, or parity, for mental and physical illnesses. Both bills would be a huge change. The House bill differs from the Senate version, most notably in the following areas:

1. The House version defines the “minimum scope of coverage.” Under the House bill, if a group health plan provides any mental health benefits, then it must cover the same wide range of mental illnesses and addiction disorders covered by the health plan with the largest enrollment of federal employees. By contrast, the Senate bill does not specify what mental conditions or diagnoses must be covered.
2. The House bill says that federal law will not override “any state law that provides greater consumer protections, benefits,” rights or remedies. The Senate bill, by contrast, would “supersede any provision of state law” that establishes standards different from the federal standards for cost-sharing and treatment limits.

The differences are significant and have been covered in the media. A conference committee is currently attempting to develop a compromise bill. Their intent is to work together and to craft a compromise that can get passed. Many individuals and organizations are supporting both measures. If you would like more information about the two bills, we suggest that you visit Mental Health America’s website, which has synopses of both versions and helpful related material at http://takeaction.mentalhealthamerica.net/site/PageServer?pagename=Equity_Campaign_house_bill_summary.

If you decide that you would like to support the House version, you may contact Representatives at <http://www.house.gov/writerep/>

We at the Center for Clinical Social Work will continue to issue news bulletins and empower you to take action. If you have not done so already, please join the Center (see “Membership” tab at www.CenterCSW.org) and support your profession!

Sincerely,

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President, Center for Clinical Social Work