

PARITY IMPLEMENTATION COALITION

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COALITION HAILS ADMINISTRATION'S ENFORCEMENT OF PARITY LAW

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Members of the Parity Implementation Coalition laud the implementation of interim final mental health and addiction parity regulations.

Regulations for the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA) went into effect *for plan years beginning on or after July 1, 2010*, meaning expanded access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment for millions of Americans. In the absence of final regulations, plans have been required to make a good faith compliance effort since the law went into effect on October 3, 2009.

The Parity Implementation Coalition is a group of addiction and mental health consumer and provider organizations committed to the implementation of the 2008 parity law.

“With implementation of the regulations, insurers can no longer discriminate against people seeking recovery from mental health and addictive disorders,” said Mark Mishek, president and CEO of the national nonprofit organization Hazelden. “We applaud the Obama Administration for implementing and enforcing these regulations to ensure individuals can access the benefits promised to them under the law.”

Coalition Steering Committee member Mark Covall, President/CEO of the National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems said, “Thanks to the efforts of Secretaries Sebelius, Solis and Geithner in developing the regulations and the efforts of Reps. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), his father the late Ted Kennedy (D-MA), retired Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM), Sen. Chris Dodd (D-CT), retired Rep. Jim Ramstad (R-MN), and the Chairmen and staff of the Committees in the House and Senate who all worked diligently to pass the law, now we have regulations that allow access to quality mental health and addiction services for the millions of Americans with health insurance who need them.”

The Parity Implementation Coalition also announced plans today for a new online resource center to assist individuals and families with accessing their new rights and benefits under the law. At the site, individuals and organizations will be able to document any enforcement problems with MHPAEA. The new Parity Implementation Coalition website will be launched this summer. In the interim, individuals who have difficulty accessing their benefits should contact the US Department of Labor at 1.866.444.EBSA (3272).

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The Parity Implementation Coalition includes the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Psychiatric Association, American Society of Addiction Medicine, Betty Ford Center, Faces and Voices of Recovery, Hazelden, Mental Health America, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems, National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare and The Watershed Addiction Treatment Programs. The organizations advanced parity legislation for over twelve years in an effort to end discrimination against individuals and families who seek services for mental health and substance use disorders and remain committed to its effective implementation.