



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
CHILD & ADOLESCENT
PSYCHIATRY

American Academy
of Psychiatry and
the Law



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**Psychiatry Applauds AMA's Support of Equal Insurance Coverage
for Mental and Physical Illnesses**

Arlington, Va. – The American Psychiatric Association (APA), the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP), and the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law (AAPL) praise the American Medical Association's (AMA) increased support for federal and state legislation that would make insurance coverage for mental illnesses match the coverage that is extended to physical illnesses. The AMA's House of Delegates (HOD) passed a resolution strongly supporting "mental health parity," as the concept of non-discriminatory mental health insurance coverage is sometimes known.

The AMA's new initiative calls for the development of a comprehensive report which will include a summary and analysis of existing mental health parity legislation and a review of the research on the impact of parity on access, quality, and cost of health care at both the state and federal levels. The AMA also reaffirmed its commitment to work with state and specialty medical societies to develop specific recommendations for a clear roadmap for achieving comprehensive parity in each state.

"Today many patients suffering from mental illnesses are discriminated against when they are required to pay higher fees within insurance plans and allowed fewer visits for treatment of their condition," said John S. McIntyre, M.D., chair of the APA delegation to the AMA HOD. "Public opinion research shows that Americans support mental health parity. The Congressional Budget Office and actual experience with insurance plans that have offered fair coverage show that parity is affordable, if not cost-neutral."

"By this action, the AMA has reaffirmed its longstanding commitment to parity," said David Fassler, M.D., vice chair of the AMA Psychiatry Section Council and AACAP delegate to the AMA HOD. "They've also agreed to work with us to evaluate the legislative history of parity and to develop a comprehensive report analyzing the available data on the actual experience with parity. This will be a valuable asset in our ongoing advocacy efforts."

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The financial and human costs of untreated mental illnesses are great, while data clearly show that the cost of instituting equal coverage for treatment of mental illnesses is low. In 2005, a major study of the Federal Employee Health Benefit Program (FEHBP) found that providing non-discriminatory coverage of mental health and substance abuse treatment services improved insurance protection *without* increasing overall costs.

The APA, AACAP, and AAPL look forward to working with the AMA in completing this breakthrough report that will help ensure that patients and their families are treated equally and fairly.

To view the policies, please visit the AMA Web site at www.ama-assn.org.

About the American Psychiatric Association:

The American Psychiatric Association is the nation's leading medical specialty society whose more than 37,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org. **About**

About the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry:

Representing over 7,400 child and adolescent psychiatrists nationwide, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry is the leading authority on children's mental health. AACAP members actively research, diagnose, and treat psychiatric disorders affecting children, adolescents, and their families. Visit AACAP at www.aacap.org.

About the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law:

The American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law is an organization of psychiatrists dedicated to excellence in practice, teaching, and research in forensic psychiatry. Founded in 1969, AAPL currently has more than 1,900 members in North America and around the world. Visit AAPL at www.aapl.org.

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