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## **Mental Health Leaders Meet with Transition Team**

**ARLINGTON, Va. (Jan. 15, 2009)** — The need for full integration of mental health and substance use disorder treatment into the health care system was the top priority of eight mental health leaders, including American Psychiatric Association Medical Director James H. Scully Jr., M.D., when they met Thursday with key health policy staff of the Obama presidential transition team.

“It’s clear that the incoming administration is looking to build on the principles of last year’s mental health and substance use disorder parity law as President Obama moves ahead with health reform,” Dr. Scully said following the meeting, which was the first of what promises to be a series of discussions on mental health care policy.

The APA provided a series of written short- and long-term recommendations, including increasing federal research to improve early diagnosis and treatment and eliminating a two-year waiting period for recipients of Social Security Disability Insurance to qualify for Medicare.

The APA also recommended prompt guidance in connection with the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008. Employers will require time to negotiate appropriate coverage to comply with the act, which is effective in 2010.

“It’s a great accomplishment for Congress to have enacted the parity law, but now it needs to be quickly operationalized so patients, health professionals, employers and insurers can work together to make it a reality,” Scully said.

Participants also agreed on the need for increased funding for health care workforce training, for public education about mental health and substance use disorder treatment, and to promote access and treatment for mental health in an integrated health care system.

### **About the American Psychiatric Association**

The American Psychiatric Association is the nation’s leading medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at [www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org) and [www.HealthyMinds.org](http://www.HealthyMinds.org).

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