



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 15, 2014

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PARITY IMPLEMENTATION COALITION SEEKS FEDERAL ACTION ON PARITY IN RESPONSE TO 60 MINUTES REPORT

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Members of the Parity Implementation Coalition applaud the compelling 60 Minutes report, “Denied.” The report depicts the shattered lives millions of Americans face as a result of their health plan’s refusal to pay for medically necessary mental health or addiction treatment for themselves or a loved one.

“Our members stand with the millions of individuals and families who face insurance discrimination as a result of living with a mental or addictive disorder” said Andrew Sperling, Director of Federal Advocacy for the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

“The report reveals the reality of systematic denials that leave both patients and providers making life saving decisions with one arm tied behind their backs. This highlights the significance of rights afforded under the federal parity law, as well as the need for fair and independent external appeals of denied care as required under the ACA” said Beth Ann Middlebrook, attorney for The Watershed Addiction Treatment Programs, Inc.

The Parity Implementation Coalition is also calling for the following:

- There must be full state and federal implementation and enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act and regulations. This bipartisan legislation, signed into law by President Bush, is still not fully implemented or routinely followed.
- Health plans must disclose their “medical necessity criteria” and how it is applied to both medical and mental health and substance use disorder treatment services so individuals can determine if their mental health/substance use care is on par with their physical health care, as already required by federal law and regulations.
- Health plans must be required to publicly disclose their denial rates for mental health and substance use care and medical/surgical care, both at the claims level and on internal and external appeal.
- Federal health programs such as Medicaid, which cover 65 million Americans, must be brought into compliance with the parity law.

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The Parity Implementation Coalition is an alliance of addiction and mental health consumer and provider organizations. Its members include the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, American Psychiatric Association, American Society of Addiction Medicine, Cumberland Heights, Faces and Voices of Recovery, Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, MedPro

Billing, Mental Health America, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers, National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems and The Watershed Treatment Programs, Inc. In an effort to end discrimination against individuals and families who seek services for mental health and substance use disorders, these organizations advocated for more than fourteen years in support of parity legislation and are committed to the full implementation and enforcement of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA). More information about the Coalition is available at www.parityispersonal.org.