



In This Issue

Mental Health Parity
Regs Released

Seeds Conference
Success

Meet MHA

Upcoming Events

Donate



November 15, 2013

Dear ,

Mental Health Parity Regulations Released

Last week, on November 8th, the U. S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor and Treasury jointly issued the final rule that implements the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA), passed in 2008. The Act was the crowning piece of mental health legislation for Senators Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici. Issuance of the rule has long been a major legislative priority for Mental Health America of Arizona.

As Cheryl Collier, Board member and former Executive Director noted, "This is something MHA-AZ led the way on in Arizona. We marched on the Capitol with Balloons taped to my MHA business card with a nickel attached to it, indicating that's all it would cost to bring mental health parity to Arizona. This is a great day."

The law ensures that health plan features such as co-pays, deductibles, and visit limits are generally not more restrictive for mental health or substance use disorder benefits than they are for medical or surgical benefits.

With the publication of the final rule, specific additional consumer protections have been added, including:

- Ensuring that parity applies to intermediate levels of care received in residential treatment or intensive outpatient settings;
- Clarifying the scope of the transparency required of health plans, including the disclosure rights of plan participants, to ensure compliance with the law;
- Clarifying that parity applies to all plan standards,

including geographic limits, facility-type limits, and network adequacy; and,

- Eliminating an exception to the existing parity rule that was determined to be confusing, unnecessary, and open to abuse.

The rule does, however, contain exceptions which community advocates need to be aware of and understand. The regulations do not apply to:

1. Non-Federal governmental plans that have 100 or fewer employees;
2. Small private employers who have 50 or fewer employees;
3. Large group health plans that can demonstrate excessive costs to comply. . If the cost to comply increases premiums at least 2 percent in the first year of implementation or at least 1 percent in any subsequent plan year, the group may apply for an exemption. Plans must then notify covered individuals that mental health parity provisions are not part of their coverage. Exemptions last only 1 year, but health plans can seek further exemptions.
4. Self-funded non-Federal governmental employers that opt-out of the requirements of mental health parity. They may elect to exempt their plan (opt-out) from the requirements, but are then required to issue a notice of opt-out to enrollees at the time of enrollment and annually thereafter.

Medicare, Medicaid (AHCCCS in Arizona), and KidsCare are classified as neither group health plans nor issuers of health insurance. However, KidsCare, AHCCCS Benchmark Benefit plans, and managed care plans that contract with State Medicaid programs, must provide services subject to certain standards outlined in mental health parity regulations and law.

While Medicare is not affected by these new regulations, some small steps are underway to provide assistance to Medicare recipients in need of mental health services. Under the Medicare Improvement for Patients and Providers Act passed in 2008, Medicare coinsurance for mental health services will be gradually reduced so that by 2014 consumers will pay 20 percent - just as they do for most other services. Limitations on the number of

days for inpatient psychiatric hospital care remain in place. Congressional action would be required to make that change.

Ready for some light reading? Here's the link to the federal [regulations](#).

Seeds Conference a Success

Wow, what an amazing two days for Mental Health America of Arizona (MHA-AZ) on October 21st and 22nd!

Over 80 people attended the sunset reception at the home of Joyce Geysler, wherein Mayor Greg Stanton of Phoenix welcomed Dr. David Shern, MHA's President and CEO, to Phoenix and assisted us in the official "reboot" of MHA-AZ. We had the chance to socialize and make as well as renew friendships. What a lovely evening! We truly thank our many friends for their attendance and contribution to the evening.



Hostess Joyce Geysler with Dr. Shern

On Tuesday, over 110 folks joined in the 22nd Seeds Conference at the ABIL Center in Phoenix. Dr. Shern kicked off the meeting with his presentation about trauma being the new face of the public health epidemic that our country and community need to address. We will post the PowerPoints from the presentations on MHA-AZ's website at www.mhaarizona.org.

Monica Coury, Assistant Director for Intergovernmental Affairs at AHCCCS, provided an excellent overview of the restoration and expansion of the AHCCCS program scheduled to launch on January 1, 2014. Cory Nelson, Deputy Director for Division of Behavioral Health Services at the Arizona Department of Health Services, provided a preview of the issues DHS faces with plans for integration in the next round of bids for RBHAs serving Greater Arizona scheduled for release in the summer of 2014.

We greatly appreciate the expert panel which fielded some questions about key elements for our community and state agencies as plans continue to be developed to move Arizona to integration. The panel members were asked to give concrete examples of what has proven successful in recent years as programs have explored ways to improve care. Participants in the panel included: Shawn Thiele with Magellan Arizona, Jill Kennedy with NARBHA, Neal Cash with CPSA, Eddy Broadway with Mercy Maricopa, and Terry Stevens with Cenpatico. Making the day flow well was Chick Arnold, a local icon in the field of mental health. He kept us on track for the day. Great job one and all!



We simply didn't get to all the questions due to time pressure. Luckily, the state agency staff agreed to help MHA-AZ to review and respond to those questions. Our plan is to have those questions posted on the website by end of the month. So, stay tuned.

In closing we want to again thank Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson and Johnson as well as Sunovion Pharmaceuticals for their financial support for this event.

MEET MHA of AZ's BOARD MEMBERS

It was recently suggested that the Board of Directors of Mental Health America of Arizona should take turns writing a newsletter article to introduce ourselves and let people know why we're involved with the organization. As Chair of the Board I was volunteered to go first.

I'm a native Arizonan and frankly love our great State. I've never wanted to live anywhere else. Beginning my career in 1968 as a Mental Health Tech at the Arizona State Hospital, I've had great opportunities in the mental health field. I got to work as a counselor and case manager at a community mental health center in south Phoenix and later did a brief stint at Camelback Hospital. In 1974 I became administrator of community programs in the Arizona Department of Health Services. Vicki, my wife of almost forty years now, and I married that year. During this time I attended AZ State University, obtaining a Master's degree in Educational Psychology in 1973. In 1990 I founded the Pinal Gila Behavioral Health Association to administer Medicaid funding for behavioral health in Gila and Pinal counties. In 2005, we restructured and renamed the organization Empowerment Systems, a non-profit family of health education and wellness programs. The program can be found at [website](#).

I've had the good fortune to experience a variety of clients and organizations, from clinical and administrative, rural and urban, prevention and treatment, private and public, and community and institutional perspectives. One of the main reasons that I'm involved with MHA of AZ today is because of the organization's broad perspective and inclusiveness. MHA is and always has been concerned with a wide range of behavioral health issues; including all age groups, the wide spectrum of disorders, the needs of families and consumers,

recovery, wellness and more traditional treatment approaches, private and public funded programs, etc.

One disappointment I have with our State is the lack of public policy support for health, education and social programs. But I believe that we can do something about this. I also think there is evidence that it may be improving. A good example is the Governor's and legislative support for Medicaid expansion and implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Mental Health parity, for which we have worked for years, looms large in these programs. Support is also there for other programs that we care about, including prevention and wellness, child welfare and social determinants of health. The Governor's budget request for the Department of Economic Security reflects recognition of the need in this area.

I like to think that we've had an impact on these policy issues over the past year since MHA of AZ was re-established. But of course we can and must do more. The MH Association of Associations and our network of members are designed to inform and empower people to actively advocate for sound public mental health policy here in Arizona. Please join us in our efforts. I'm hopeful that together we can change things and that's why I'm involved. I'd like to hear your comments and suggestions about how MHA of AZ can do more. You can reach me through our website, www.mhaarizona.org or jbeveridge@emsysonline.org or at 480.367.6937. I look forward to hearing from you. Thanks, Jack Beveridge.



Vicki & Jack on their recent trip to Greece

Upcoming Community Events

Crisis Response Network who has been contracted by the state to do the SMI determinations and handle all appeals of those determinations will provide 2 community information sessions.

- Tuesday, **November 19th** at 9:30 am at the CRN Office at 1275 W. Washington St., Tempe
- Wednesday, **December 4th** at 5:30 pm at the FICA office at 5333 N. 7th St., A100, Phoenix.

Magellan Health Services will be hosting a Safe Talk training on Tuesday, **December 17th** from 9 am to 12:30 pm at their office at 4801 E. Washington's Learning Center. To register go to this [site](#). This is a free suicide prevention program.

Don't forget that Open Enrollment for our Medicare members ends on Saturday, **December 7th**. If someone needs some assistance they may call the State Health Insurance Assistance Program. The SHIP Hotline is (800) 432-4040.

Participants in the Marketplace/Exchange need to also be signed up by **December 15th** for coverage to begin on January 1, 2014. Yes, indeed there have been problems, but paper applications are being taken as well as telephone assistance.

Please Save This Important Date

Saturday, March 22, 2014 at 6 pm the Mental Health Guild is turning 50 years old and the Mental Health America of Arizona is turning 60! Join us as we team up to throw a big 50's/60's bash to celebrate! Contact Cheryl Collier for sponsorship opportunities. She can be reached at colliercl@mac.com or 602-284-0619.





We invite your participation and sharing of this information through resending this newsletter or encouraging your friends and colleagues to sign up to be on the monthly newsletter list. We want to be inclusive. Share the word. Get involved.

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