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Sent: Wednesday, May 20, 2009 3:57 PM
To: EBSA, E-OHPSCA - EBSA
Subject: MENTAL HEALTH PARITY AND ADDICTION EQUITY ACT - PUBLIC COMMENT

I am absolutely in favor of this legislation and feel it is way overdue. Mental health and substance abuse diseases should be treated equal to other medical conditions. I also feel that the medical necessity criteria must not be too stringent or it will eliminate much needed benefits for treatment by those who need them. The key I believe is having qualified, knowledgeable medical providers assessing these patients needs to determine what level of treatment should be rendered. I also totally agree that equally important is for there to be flexibility and innovation to decrease and eliminate silos between medical and behavioral care provider and practitioner communities and integrate overall health and wellness care management for the well being of the patient. I have experienced the frustration first hand of trying to differentiate symptoms as medical or behavioral with my teenage daughter and it is very difficult because the two communities do not speak to each other and operate in silos. Eventually the diagnosis was addiction to drugs causing the symptoms, which neither the behavioral health or the medical practitioners were able to diagnose. If my daughter had not confided in me that she was addicted to opioids, she could be dead now. Even in the rehabilitation process, there is not proper coordination of treatment and I worry that the medications being administered by the mental health provider should be monitored by a medical provider. It creates a very difficult treatment path and is not in the best interest of the patient. Please do everything possible to eliminate these silos and let our youth recover from the substance abuse and mental health problems that are rampantly out of control in our country and because of the stigma associated with these diseases and lack of benefits available to treat them, many are not even counted in the statistics. Thank you.

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