

EBSA News



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Mental Health Parity Act Extended to December 31, 2004

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Labor’s Employee Benefits Security Administration (EBSA) today announced a technical amendment extending the interim final rules under the Mental Health Parity Act (MHPA) to Dec. 31, 2004.

President Bush signed the Mental Health Reauthorization Act of 2003 on Dec. 19, 2003 (P.L. 108-197, 117 Stat. 2998), extending the sunset date of MHPA to Dec. 31, 2004.

The original MHPA contained a sunset provision requiring that provisions of the Act would not apply to benefits for services furnished on or after Sept. 30, 2001. MHPA has been amended twice before to extend the sunset date.

MHPA requires that annual or lifetime dollar limits for mental health benefits be no lower than the dollar limits for medical/surgical benefits offered by a group health plan. The Act applies to group health plans or health insurance coverage offered by issuers in connection with a group health plan that offers both mental health and medical/surgical benefits. However, it does not require plans to offer mental health benefits.

The technical amendment extending the sunset date is set to be published in the Jan. 26 Federal Register. For more information about mental health benefits, contact EBSA at **1-866-444-EBSA (3272)** or visit the Web site at www.dol.gov/ebsa to obtain a free copy of “Questions and Answers: Recent Changes in Health Care Law.”

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