

**From:** [Ashlea Johnson](#)  
**To:** [EBSA MHPAEA Request for Comments](#)  
**Subject:** Comment regarding mental health parity  
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I am commenting to express my concern about the services provided by master's level mental health professionals being so much lower than those provided by a physical health provider. As a LCSW in a small town in Lake County, Florida, I once owned a flourishing private practice in a community that is one of the fastest growing in population in the nation. I employed 8 therapists with full time clinical hours. Without notice of any kind, I received word from BCBS of Florida (my largest payer) that my rate would be cut for CPT Code 90837 and 90834 by over 35%. No business can sustain such fluctuations in CONTRACTED agreements. I shifted my practice to be able to provide for my family, thus closing the doors on a mental health practice that had served the community for a decade.

Our community has suffered severe losses in the past years due to the mental health crisis for teens. In one school year BEFORE Covid, we had three suicides by gunshot in local schools, and issues have not improved since then. I moved the ESE Director at my school and her two children into my home after her estranged husband drove into her parents' home- murdered her father in front of her 5 yo son, and then shot himself in the foyer with his AR-15. This was not in an area riddled with crime and generations of struggle. This was a middle class community. Our nation is not well.

I encourage our government to explore the unreasonable reimbursement rates for master's level mental health professionals and ensure parity for behavioral and physical healthcare providers. I cannot provide for my family making less than I would if I waited tables at Disney. I have obtained advanced licensure and years of training, approval to provide clinical supervision to training social workers, became a Supreme Court Certified Family Law Mediator to serve children in high conflict divorce cases and my time is worth much more than \$65/hour. It is laughable to believe that our federal government even cares that this is unfolding before their eyes- how could leaders NOT know.

But here it is- my effort to communicate how we are failing this lock down generation by strangling access to mental health care. I pray you read this.

Ashlea Johnson