

Frequently Asked Questions Federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act

When do the new federal mental health parity regulations go into effect?

The new mental health parity regulations begin October 3, 2009 and go into effect throughout 2010 as each employer group plan renews their coverage with us. Some members will continue to have their current benefits until their plan renews later in 2010. Regence will implement the federal mental health parity regulations for new groups effective October 15, 2009.

Who will be affected by the new regulations?

Most employer group plan members will be covered for treatment of mental health and substance use disorder services consistent with other medical conditions. Federal mental health parity does not apply to all member contracts. Please verify patient eligibility by using the Provider Center (formerly Regence Online Services for Providers) or contact the Customer Service number listed on the back of the member's identification card.

Which members are not included in this change?

The new regulations do not apply to non-federal government groups that are self-funded, uninsured persons, incarcerated individuals, Medicaid or Medicare beneficiaries, small group plans (2-50 members) or Individual plan members. In addition, groups may elect not to purchase mental health and substance use disorder benefits if state law permits.

How does the Federal Mental Health Parity Act interact with State Parity laws?

Plans governed by state law (e.g., fully insured plans) are required to comply with the state law and the new federal mental health parity law. States are able to enact laws that exceed the requirements of federal parity. For example, states may mandate health plans to include mental health and substance use disorder benefits in a plan, while the federal parity law does not.

Does the Federal Mental Health Parity Act define covered diagnoses?

No, the Act does not define covered diagnoses, nor does it require health plans to cover all Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, IV (DSM-IV) diagnoses. Covered diagnoses vary based upon the member contract. For questions regarding covered diagnoses, please contact Regence Customer Service at the number listed on the back of the member's identification card.

Does the Federal Mental Health Parity Act limit medical management processes?

No, the Act does not expressly limit medical management or mandate parity in medical management techniques. The Act does not restrict a plan from establishing medical necessity criteria for mental health/substance use disorders as long as such criteria are made available to plan members. It does not prohibit a plan from establishing other administrative criteria, including pre-authorization of services, care management or case management.

For more information on Federal Mental Health Parity or Regence Behavioral Health:

- Visit our *Provider Web Site* at www.wa.regence.com/provider
- Contact Regence Behavioral Health at 1 (800) 780-7881, option 2
- Contact a Behavioral Health provider relations representative: Joeleen Horning-Dinh at (206) 470-4503 or Erin Hughes at (206) 470-4308