

PUBLIC SUBMISSION

As of: May 28, 2009
Tracking No. 809ae602
Comments Due: May 28, 2009

Docket: IRS-2009-0008

Request for Information for Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008

Comment On: IRS-2009-0008-0001

Request for Information Regarding the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008

Document: IRS-2009-0008-0035

Comment on FR Doc # E9-09629

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General Comment

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Comments regarding Regulatory Guidance USCG-2007-27022
page 19157, II B specific areas 1 and 4

I am a clinical psychotherapist who provides EEG and peripheral biofeedback treatment to individuals with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Headache, Chronic Pain and Mood Disorders. EEG and autonomic biofeedback is an empirically validated and widely recognized effective non-medication treatment for ADHD, as well as many other conditions. There are over 50 studies evaluating the effectiveness of EEG biofeedback in the treatment of ADHD, Substance Use disorders and Autism. A recent review of this literature concluded "EEG biofeedback meets the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry criteria for" Clinical Guidelines "for treatment of ADHD." This means that EEG biofeedback meets the same criteria as medication for treating ADHD, and that EEG biofeedback "should always be considered as an intervention for this disorder by the clinician". Biofeedback has been shown to be as effective as any prophylactic medication studied to date at preventing migraine

This service has been denied by Georgia Medicaid, Aetna, United Behavioral

Health, Blue Cross, Cigna, and Amerigroup.

This is limitation of an effective and validated treatment for a mental health problem. The reasons given by the insurance companies for this denial fell into two categories: 1) our company does not cover biofeedback for Mental Health problems or 2) there is not yet sufficient evidence for the efficacy of EEG biofeedback. As such, they are using evidence-based criteria that are far more restrictive for mental health services than the criteria which are used for medical/surgical services. There are many routine medical and surgical procedures which have far fewer controlled studies about their efficacy than does EEG biofeedback. These medical and surgical procedures are generally not limited because of concerns about how many controlled studies have been performed about them.

We believe that the parity regulations, based on legal reviews of the parity statute should require that employers and plans pay for the same range and scope of services for Behavioral Treatments as they do for Med Surg benefits and that a plan cannot be more restrictive in their managed care criteria and reviews for MII and SA disorders when compared to Med Surg. Today plans are being more restrictive in how they review evidenced-based Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatments when compared to Med Surg treatments. This violates both the intent and letter of the parity statute and we hope that the regulations will clarify that this can't continue.

Mental health Issues are one of the great prejudices of our society, based in part that these problems are somehow less worthy of care or something we should be ashamed of or hide. It is time to treat people with Mental illness with the respect and empathy that we treat all other medical problems with.

Sincerely,

Joseph West, LMHC