



Dave Sunday
Attorney General

Pennsylvania is in the midst of a serious mental health crisis. It touches every Pennsylvania family in one way or another whether it is through substance use disorders or another challenge. As a career prosecutor, I've seen the effects of this crisis first hand. Too often, when something tragic happens in our communities you can often trace that person's life back and find a time when a mental health issue went undiagnosed or untreated.

It doesn't have to be like this.

Too many Pennsylvania residents do not get the care that they need and deserve because they have been wrongly denied coverage of a necessary treatment or because their insurance provides too little assistance, making it unaffordable.

If a health plan includes coverage for mental health or substance use disorder treatment (sometimes collectively referred to as 'behavioral health'), both state and federal law require that plan to cover treatment for mental health and substance use disorder the same way they cover physical health concerns. This principle is called "parity," because the coverages are supposed to be "on par" with each other.

As Attorney General, I swore an oath to defend all Pennsylvanians, including the hundreds of thousands who have mental health or substance use disorders. That includes advocating for patients if they are wrongly denied necessary care.

If you feel you have been treated unfairly by your insurer, call my office's Health Care Section toll-free at 1-877-888-4877, email us at healthcare@attorneygeneral.gov, or visit www.attorneygeneral.gov/health-care-form. And if you need help locating treatment, please contact the PA Get Help hotline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

As Attorney General, I plan to focus on the mental health crisis with every tool available to me. If you are experiencing mental health challenges in your life please know that you are not alone. It's ok to be not ok and there is no wrong door to ask for help. As we address our communities collective mental health challenges, our families will be stronger and more secure and our communities will be safer.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP!

The Health Care Section has a hotline for consumers facing barriers in treatment related to a mental health condition or substance use disorder. We want to hear from and help anyone who believes they are the victim of a parity violation. Members of some communities may face inequities that create additional obstacles to maintaining positive mental health, and the Health Care Section is committed to addressing potential barriers to mental health treatment for those groups.

Your communications with our office are confidential. We take the privacy and confidentiality of these matters seriously, and this is a priority of the Office of Attorney General.

If you have a complaint, please feel free to reach out to the Health Care Section by:



1-877-888-4877



healthcare@attorneygeneral.gov



www.attorneygeneral.gov/health-care-form



/PAAttorneyGen



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www.attorneygeneral.gov



Ensuring equal coverage for mental health and substance use disorder treatment coverage



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Only 43% of adults diagnosed with mental illness received treatment each year



PARITY LAWS

Under Pennsylvania and Federal law, your insurer must provide the same level of coverage for mental health and substance use disorder treatments as they do for medical and surgical treatments. The law requires that mental health or substance use treatment coverage under many health plans be no more restrictive than medical and surgical coverage in four main areas:

- annual/lifetime limits on benefits
- financial requirements such as copays and deductibles
- limits on frequency and number of treatments
- adequacy of provider network, reimbursement rates to providers, prior authorization requirements, and other “non-quantitative limits”

The Attorney General’s Health Care Section assists consumers who are experiencing difficulty dealing with healthcare organizations, including doctor’s offices, pharmacies, and insurers. The Health Care Section mediates complaints filed against healthcare organizations, investigates business practices, and takes legal action on behalf of the Commonwealth against companies that engage in unfair or deceptive acts or practices.

If you have any problems obtaining or accessing your coverage for treatment of a mental health condition or substance use disorder, the Health Care Section can help mediate the dispute.

HOW TO SPOT A POSSIBLE PARITY VIOLATION

Your insurance company may be violating the law if :

- your insurer makes you jump through hoops or try other types of treatment before letting you access the care prescribed by your provider
- you have to call your insurer for approval before accessing any mental health or substance use treatment services, or they frequently make you get re-approved for care
- you have a hard time finding someone to treat you that is in-network for your insurance, is accepting new patients, and is close to where you live
- your insurer limits the number of times you can see your mental health or substance use treatment provider
- you have received denial letters from your insurer that do not fully explain why you were denied access to the care you need

TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS

If you have a problem with coverage for necessary mental health or addiction treatment, you should:



File a complaint promptly with the Attorney General’s Health Care Section. The sooner you do, the more effective we can be and the sooner you can get the care you need.



Call or write a letter to your insurance plan’s customer service department.



Request relevant information you’re your insurer: a detailed, written explanation of the denial; comprehensive plan documents; and documents comparing the plan’s medical necessity criteria for physical benefits with its criteria for mental health or substance use disorder benefits



File a formal complaint or grievance with your plan. If your phone call to the plan does not solve your problem, call the plan again and tell them that you want to file a formal complaint or a formal grievance.



1 in 5 adults who seek mental health treatment never receive it