

STATE OF ALASKA
THE LEGISLATURE

1998

Source

HCS CSSCR 14(RLS) am H

Legislative
Resolve No.

63



Establishing the Alaska Task Force on Parity for Mental Health.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

WHEREAS persons in Alaska with mental health disorders and their families face disparity in the adequacy, scope, and coverage of private health insurance that they need; and

WHEREAS it is estimated that mental health disorders cost the Alaska economy \$187,272,000 in 1996 in lost productivity, absenteeism, disability, and early death; and

WHEREAS other states that have adopted insurance parity laws for mental disorders have demonstrated that costs of parity have been far less than projected and that savings to the public through decreased costs of Medicaid, Medicare, and other programs have far outweighed the additional costs; and

WHEREAS the Alaska Mental Health Board estimates there are over 44,000 children, youth, and adults in the state who experience serious mental illnesses and emotional disorders; and

WHEREAS the Congress passed the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 that does address parity for lifetime benefits and annual reimbursement limits for mental health services, but does not address differentiation between mental and physical illnesses with respect to co-payments, deductibles, and benefit design; and

WHEREAS 15 other states have established laws addressing mental health parity in insurance practices, and 25 other states introduced bills on the subject in 1997;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Alaska State Legislature that the Alaska Task Force on Parity for Mental Health is established for the purpose of studying, after defining the terms "mental disorders," "mental illness," "serious mental illness," "mental injury," and "mental health consumers" for purpose of its work,

(1) differential treatment in health insurance coverage between a person with a mental disorder and a person with a physical disorder;

(2) costs of mental health coverage in relation to other health care insurance, with special emphasis on parity, and the extent of such coverage, including deductibles and co-payments, disorders and conditions to be covered, and other pertinent issues;

(3) ways to define and quantify unmet mental health needs in the state and recommending meaningful ways to measure the efficacy of treatment of mental health needs by analyzing possible outcome data collection measures;

(4) the positive and negative effects on mental health consumers if parity for mental health coverage is mandated in Alaska;

(5) the feasibility of implementing any recommendations of the task force through legislation; and

(6) the effect of the September 30, 2001, sunset date for the Mental Health Parity Act of 1996 on matters set out in (1) - (5) of this clause; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall be composed of 11 members, as follows:

(1) two members of the Senate appointed by the President of the Senate; one member shall be a member of the majority, and one member shall be a member of the minority;

(2) two members of the House of Representatives appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives; one member shall be a member of the majority, and one member shall be a member of the minority;

(3) the commissioner of health and social services, or a designee;

(4) one member representing the Alaska Mental Health Board appointed by the Alaska Mental Health Board;

(5) one member representing the state Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse appointed by the state Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse;

(6) two members representing the insurance industry appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives; one member may be the director of insurance; and

(7) two members representing mental health consumers and community-based mental health providers appointed by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives; one member shall be a consumer, and one member shall be a provider; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that no general fund money shall be expended to support the task force; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that a simple majority of the members of the task force shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, and all actions of the task force shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members present; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force may conduct its work during the legislative session and the interim between sessions, may use the teleconference network, and may conduct public hearings to receive testimony about issues relative to parity for mental health; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall provide to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations on these matters not later than January 1, 1999; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force is terminated at 11:59 p.m. on February 28, 1999.