

Monitoring Proposed Changes in Insurance Policies Impacting Mental Health



WASHINGTON STATE COALITION OF
MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND CONSUMERS

Advocates for Ethical Mental Health Care

www.wacoalition.org

Spring 2010

Regence Meetings

Coalition President Sue Wiedenfeld, Washington State Society for Clinical Social Work President Robert Odell, and Laura Groshong, LICSW and Coalition Lobbyist recently met with Regence Behavioral Health administrators. The focus of the meeting was to clarify their plan to implement the new Federal and state parity laws. The law now requires a mental health benefit be included in all insurance plans — large, small, and individual

—with a mental health benefit that is at parity with medical/surgical benefits.

As a result of these new laws, insurers in Washington are making changes in their policies to be in compliance. Prior to the meeting with Regence, Laura contacted UMP, Group Health, and Premera to find out what their plans were for implementing the new mental health parity laws. Uniform Medical Plan and Group Health have

decided to implement an unlimited mental health benefit, though Group Health may require a report of treatment progress after 20 sessions. Premera is still deciding when to require a treatment report, but is planning to go the same route of an unlimited benefit.

The Regence letter sent in October appeared to limit mental health benefits to 20 sessions, and this was

(Continued on page 2)

Save the Date

- BILLING AND NAVIGATING ELECTRONIC RECORDS
MARCH 27 / PAGE 4
9:30 TO 12:00

www.wacoalition.org

Coming Event

March 27
Saturday

Billing and Navigating Electronic Records

Good Shepherd Center
9:30 to 12:00 noon
4649 Sunnyside Ave N
Seattle 98103

No Charge !!

Invite your friends

See Page 4

From the Chair

Dear Coalition Members,
Happy warm winter to all! We have several plans based on your input from our earlier survey; see details on page 4. Thanks for telling us what you want the Coalition to make available to you. We hope you enjoy these presentations. Feel free to bring friends and colleagues. It is a good way for people to find out about the Coalition and to get CE's they may need.

For those of you following the Regence developments, you will see

that this is an issue the Coalition is closely tracking. We are also tracking developments in the UMP contract (see Laura's article). We hope you enjoy being online on the Coalition Web site. We appreciate and value your membership and your commitment to quality mental health. Hope to see you at some of our events!

Sue Wiedenfeld
Coalition Chair

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the major topic and concern discussed in the meeting. The Regence group clarified that their intent is to have **an unlimited mental health benefit** and that any reasonable treatment plan showing medical necessity will be accepted for further treatment.

There is a minor glitch in how the 20 sessions for mental health benefits will be calculated, as they will include medication management as well as psychotherapy. If a clinician is not aware that the 20 sessions have passed including all mental health services, Regence will notify the clinician and request that a treatment plan be submitted, but these sessions will be covered, as long as the plan is submitted in a timely fashion. The treatment plan must include a diagnosis, GAF assessment, treatment goals and progress, as well as the number of additional sessions estimated to complete treatment. More than 20 sessions may be requested and approved. All diagnoses will be covered, except for V codes and sexual neuroses.

Regence took pains to explain that they have no intention of going to a pre-authorization model of mental health care management, and that they will also require medical services to submit treatment plans for services beyond minimums. They realize the inherent difficulties in comparing mental health treatment with medical/surgical treatment.

The Regence group asked for our help in explaining to the Insurance Commissioner that they are making a good-faith effort to comply with state laws and have been under some pressure to document their compliance since the Coalition—and other groups—sent complaints to the OIC regarding what appeared to be a non-parity limitation of mental health benefits. All diagnostic categories will be covered, including Axis II diagnoses.

Regence representatives said that they would be open to accepting all reasonable treatment plans and that they do not intend to use this as a way to limit mental

health treatment. In Oregon, where this parity system has been in place for three years, Diane Stein said she has only denied 2 requests for additional sessions out of several thousand received.

The Regence group indicated that they will be sending a new letter shortly clarifying the changes that Regence is making to comply with the new laws.

The Coalition would like to hear from those of you who are Regence providers about your experience as the new Regence procedures are implemented, which will likely be after February 1, 2010. We would especially like to know if there are any problems with getting additional sessions through Regence when needed.

Regence seems to genuinely want to provide good mental health benefits and was very responsive to our concerns. Regence may hold meetings for mental health providers in the next year to consider other ways to assess treatment efficacy, a long-standing issue in mental health. ◇

Coalition members and friends!

Renew your membership today! Keep yourself up to date regarding changes in mental health related to health care reform, and state issues like the changes in the Uniform Medical Plan. Read the several articles in this newsletter about these topics. Don't miss a future Newsletter! This is a time when you will want to track what the Coalition is doing to preserve and protect quality psychotherapy.

Invite a friend to join the Coalition. Forward the on-line newsletter that describes what we do. Remember, The Coalition represents all disciplines. **More members strengthen our message.**

RENEW TODAY!!

Be sure to give us all your information so we can update our membership for the new directory.
Renewal form, page 6

Summary of UMP Meeting

by Laura Groshong, LICSW, Coalition Lobbyist

A meeting was held with representatives from the Coalition, the Washington State Society for Clinical Social Work, the National Association of Social Workers-Washington Chapter, the Southwest Washington Association of Behavioral Health, and the Washington State Psychological Association on February 9 to discuss the current status of the Uniform Medical Plan.

Many mental health groups have been concerned about the proposed move to Aetna administration and are tracking the new RFP bids closely.

The bids must be in by February 24 and will then be reviewed for conforming to contract specifications until March 26. The final evaluations must be completed and the decision posted by mid-May. There was much common ground among the groups and some differences.

The clinical group which stands to lose the most in the kind of severe reimbursement cuts for mental health clinicians, which was planned in the Aetna proposal, was the

group in the Olympia/Vancouver corridor, as this is where the majority of UMP enrollees are.

There are still several ways to approach the problems that might arise outside actual cuts in fees:

- Network adequacy/phantom networks/phantom panels—this is a technique used by some insurers to make it appear that they have more providers than are actually available to see patients
- Definition of adequate mental health professional network – currently 200 in UMP Thurston County MH network—Aetna had only had 60—Aetna has started calling people to join as they did last summer to beef up their network
- Point out the ways that clinicians have had an unfair share of cost cuts over the past 20 years in general – it is time to stop balancing health care budgets on backs of mental health clinicians

These points are being developed into bullet pages which can be used by all groups present and

other mental health groups who may wish to participate. The issue of maintaining equal pay for all clinical groups, as UMP does currently, was a sticking point.

There are five bids currently from United Health Care, Aetna, Cigna, Regence, and ODE (unclear who this is but may be from OR). There was some agreement that of this group, Regence would be the best plan based on current fee scales.

Action Plan:

- ◆ Other groups will be contacted, including WAMFT, WMHCA, ARNP-WA, analytic groups, and Richard Spitzer's group in Bellingham to get broad support for making sure that an adequate group of mental health clinicians is included in the new UMP contract
- ◆ A legislative plan will be developed if necessary to resolve the problems which arose last summer by legislative means
- ◆ A bullet page will be developed by SWABH, incorporating the points identified above to be reviewed and distributed widely ◇



Laura Groshong



On-line Directory

To better reflect our dynamic membership as well as to provide members with a quick and easy way of contacting each other, we are preparing an electronic directory of our members. The directory can be accessed via our Web site www.wacoalition.org. Members who do not want to be listed in this manner should call us at 206-444-4304.

Join the Coalition Dues

Member	\$65
Student	\$15
Consumer	Free
Organization	\$124

Coming Attractions



BILLING AND NAVIGATING ELECTRONIC RECORDS ...

A major issue identified by many of our members who responded to the survey last year was managing electronic health records. We have invited *Office Ally* to give us an overview of their web-based billing service. They say that if you can print a claim, you can use Office Ally services. Office Ally is HIPAA compliant for transmission of CMS – 1500 and UB-04 claims, works with your existing software (including practice management software), provides online eligibility checking and detailed summary reports and it's FREE. Please join us for an informative presentation **Saturday, March 27 - 9:30 to 12:00 at Good Shepherd Center, 4649 Sunnyside Avenue North, Seattle**. There is no charge. Feel free to invite a friend.



WHAT TO DO IF A COMPLAINT IS FILED AGAINST YOU - ARE YOU PREPARED? ...

Another major issue identified in the survey related to responding to complaints. We cannot practice as effective clinicians without a good working knowledge of the laws and standards that affect our practice. David Schoolcraft is a Seattle attorney with a practice focusing on healthcare, technology and data privacy. Mr. Schoolcraft also advises clients on e-health issues (healthcare-related matters impacted by technology and the Internet) data protection and privacy including HIPAA and other federal and state privacy laws. This workshop will give you practical tips on what to do if a complaint is filed against you. **Date to be announced soon.**



THE FRUGAL (AND SAVVY) MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL ...

We would like to showcase and share those high- and low-tech user-tested practices that save you time and money as you grow and run your practice. We hope to have tips about Web sites, answering services, and generating business. Be thinking of solutions you can share with your colleagues! Who knows, there might be a book in all this!



Changing Light Bulbs...

How many therapists does it take to change a light bulb?

- None. The light bulb will change itself when it's ready.
- Just one, but the light bulb really has to want to change.
- Just one, but it takes nine visits.

How many psychiatrists does it take to change a light bulb?

- "How long have you been having this fantasy?"
- "Why does the light bulb necessarily have to change?"
- One, but he must consult the DSM-IV.

How many psychoanalysts does it take to change a light bulb?

- "How many do you think it takes?"

Excerpted with permission from Barry Erdman, LCSW
Web site
www.Bouldertherapist.com
Mental Health
Humor. Check it out!



HELP WANTED

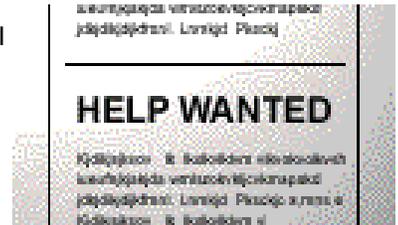
The Coalition represents a multidisciplinary group of professionals and consumers addressing a broad range of mental health needs in children, adolescents, and adults. Our Board is equally diverse. Board members have included psychiatrists, psychologists, MFTs, LCSW, LMHC, and other professionals. They also bring a wide range of experience and special interests that serve to broaden the knowledge base of our members, such as skills with special populations, use of

the Internet, and understanding of legal and ethical issues associated with mental health. From time to time, we have a need to replace a Board Member.

- Are you interested in:
- * Preserving choice, confidentiality, integrity, and quality in our mental health services?
 - * Lobbying to educate legislators about quality mental health care?
 - * Educating and supporting mental health professionals

- and consumers?
- * Influencing political and insurance industry policy to include mental health as a vital component of health care?
 - * Empowering mental health consumers to influence health care reform.

If so, please consider becoming a member of the Coalition Board! No pay, but great rewards! Please contact Sue Wiedenfeld, Coalition Chair, at 206-323-6909 or swiedenfeld@me.com.



Who Ya Gonna Call !?!?!?

Coalition Helpline: 206-444-4304
Who's My Legislator: 1-800-448-4881
(State and Federal)
Legislative Hotline: 1-100-562-6000

IF YOU ARE NOT GETTING E-MAILS ABOUT OUR EVENTS, please E-mail us with your CURRENT E-mail address: wacoalition@verizon.net. This is the best way to get Coalition news.

*Update Your E-mail and Postal Addresses by Using this Form
 or E-mailing Changes to www.wacoalition@verizon.net*

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

OK to publish information in the Directory and on Web site? Yes _____ No _____

Willing to help with specific tasks? Yes _____

It's Time to Renew Your Membership

The Coalition

of Mental Health Professionals and Consumers
P. O. Box 30087 • Seattle, Washington 98103
206-444-4304

Your dues support the Coalition's efforts to preserve ethical mental health treatment. Your dues also provide funding that supports legislative efforts, continuing education programs, our Web site, a Helpline, the newsletter, brochures, and publishing our directory.

Thank you for your continued support! It makes possible what we do. Please renew promptly to be listed in this year's directory.

Send this form to:
THE COALITION, ATTN: MEMBERSHIP
P. O. Box 30087
Seattle, WA 98103

NAME _____ Degree _____

ADDRESS (if different from last renewal)

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

PHONE Work (_____) _____ - _____ Home (_____) _____ - _____

Fax (_____) _____ - _____ Email _____

_____ Please check if you do not want your information published in the Membership Directory and/or Web Site Directory

_____ Please check if you are willing to volunteer for the Coalition

___ occasional time-limited tasks ___ I will help with political efforts

___ ask me about other needs you have ___ I will help with newsletter or membership (circle)

Legislative District: WA: _____ National: _____

Don't know? Call 1-800-448-4881

I/WE can support the Coalition at the following level:

Organizational Membership:

___ \$125 ___ \$175 ___ \$225

Professional Membership:

___ \$65 ___ \$115 ___ \$250

Student Membership:

___ \$15 ___ \$25 ___ \$65

Consumer Membership:

FREE!

Spring 2010

THANK YOU for supporting **THE COALITION**

The Coalition of Mental Health
Professionals and Consumers
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Seattle, WA 98113-2087

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