

# Welcoming the New Year with New Efforts: *The Coalition and Regence*



WASHINGTON STATE COALITION OF  
MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND CONSUMERS

Advocates for Ethical Mental Health Care

[www.wacoalition.org](http://www.wacoalition.org)

Winter 2016

## Regence Campaign 2015: The Coalition Effort to Protect Clinician Reimbursement

By *Laura Groshong, LICSW, Coalition Lobbyist*

Much Coalition activity has been going on behind the scenes regarding the Regence reimbursement cut, which occurred for all sessions with CPT code 90837 and became effective on Tuesday, December 1, 2015, and going forward. This change will affect the CPT code 90837 only and will be a 25% reimbursement cut. The Coalition is working to retroactively eliminate the cut, which is potentially a violation of mental health parity laws based on similar cuts not being made to

medical services, back to the reimbursement level that was used prior to December 1, 2015.

Know that the Coalition is not done fighting Regence on this unfair cut, which is also totally out of line with the Relative Value Unit (RVU) for 90837. The Governor's Senior Health Care Aide, Joe McGill, recently told me, "[The Governor knows that] we've never had mental health parity and it's time to start actually giving people the mental health treatment they really need." He also knew

about the Regence situation and wants the Coalition to keep the Governor in the loop on our efforts.

Here is a summary of what the Coalition has been doing since June 2015:

1. *Held two mental health clinician meetings at Swedish Hospital in July and August, engaging 80 clinicians in the process of opposing Regence's plan to combine reimbursement rates for CPT codes 90834 and 90837,*

*(Continued on page 5)*



## Coalition Members: TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2016

This month, **until January 31**, is **early bird** renewal discount of **\$65.00**, which has been the price for membership for more than 20 years. Save **\$10** and renew **NOW**. Renewal rates after January 31 (lowest being \$75) will be described in an upcoming email from our new membership chair, Marianne Lewis. Thank you, Marianne, for helping us grow and maintain the Coalition membership.

**Members, don't delay, TODAY is the day to go to our website, [www.wacoalition.org](http://www.wacoalition.org) (right now is a good time) and to click on the MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL link (using PayPal, after you complete the directory information form) and be finished with your renewal for 2016!** You want the information we share, and we want your membership! Your membership strengthens the voice for quality mental health in the state of Washington.

You can then be assured of timely updates on Regence-related issues—our major focus right now—including effective actions you can take and other issues of general concern to all mental health practitioners. We appreciate your support and your membership dollars, which are the operating budget for the Coalition.

Thanks for your commitment to the delivery of quality mental health, which includes appropriate compensation to providers for the work we do. Stay with us and tell your friends!

**Thank you for renewing today and, for many of you, your years of membership!**

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Dear Coalition members,

Happy New Year! And welcome to all recent new members of the Coalition! Many of you have joined as a result of finding out more about the Coalition's efforts with Regence and some of you through finding out more while attending our Suicide Assessment and Treatment programs presented by Robin Shapiro, LICSW. Welcome one and all!

Join the Coalition  
Dues

Member	\$75
Student	\$15
Consumer	Free

Mail to  
P O Box 30087  
Seattle, WA 98113-2087

On that note, this is the issue we remind you that **your \$65 00 annual dues** (which will be raised in February, after 22 years) **are due now for the 2016 year!** You can go directly to our website ([wacoalition.org](http://wacoalition.org)) and click the MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL link, or you can send a check. [If you choose to send a check, be sure to include the directory information form (page 8 of this newsletter) if you want to be listed in the online directory of members.] See renewal information in this newsletter on page 1. We are committed to this work, and your membership strengthens our voice. Thank you for sharing in the commitment to quality mental health with fair reimbursement rates.

**addresses) so that our voice of concern is very clear to all involved.** Do take the few minutes needed to do this. See templates and addresses at the end of Laura's update article. As is the Coalition style, we have been working with other disciplines to coordinate efforts.

We welcome Vanya Sandberg both to the Coalition and to the Coalition board! It is an interesting and hard-working group, so do contact us if you have some time to offer. We would love to have you.

Thanks to those who stepped forward to work on the PAC. It looks like a great group, and this is, as always, an important year to have influence in Olympia.

We will be keeping you updated as further efforts are made to get to fair reimbursement with Regence. Thanks for all the encouraging and grateful emails.

We are committed! Thanks all and wishing you the best in the New Year! Spread the word among your colleagues as we begin our 2016 membership drive:

**JOIN THE COALITION!**

Sue Wiedenfeld, PhD  
Coalition President

Many of you have been tracking the extensive Coalition efforts in reaction to the reimbursement cuts by Regence. Do see our lobbyist Laura Groshong's excellent report on Coalition activities. And it is always a great time to thank you, Laura, for your dedication, hard work, and long hours during this challenging time. As Laura writes, we have not given up, and, in fact, have extended our efforts! **This is the time for each Coalition member to take a few minutes to send the suggested letters (templates provided as well as email**

**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**

WASHINGTON STATE COALITION OF MENTAL  
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Health Professionals and Consumers

**Classifieds**

Office space to rent? Job opportunities, trainings and workshops? Coalition members, list your ad in our newsletter for only \$35! Please submit your ad to: Newsletter Editor, [wacoalitionmhpc@gmail.com](mailto:wacoalitionmhpc@gmail.com).

## Meet New Coalition Board Member Vanya Sandberg, PhD

### Coming Events

#### SUICIDE ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT WORKSHOP by

Robin Shapiro, LICSW

March 5, 2016 (Sat)  
9:00 to 4:30

Stay tuned for dates  
in July and October

Glaser Auditorium  
Swedish Hospital  
747 Broadway  
Seattle 98122

Register at  
[wacoalition.org](http://wacoalition.org)

Space is limited  
so sign up today.

6 CEUs/CPEs for  
Social Workers,  
Counselors, MFTs,  
and Psychologists

6 CMEs for MDs  
and ARNPs

Get your required  
continued education  
through the Coalition-  
sponsored (and bargain-  
priced) program!

#### CONTACT US

Email:  
[wacoalitionmhpc@gmail.com](mailto:wacoalitionmhpc@gmail.com)

Website:  
[www.wacoalition.org](http://www.wacoalition.org)

My name is Vanya Sandberg, and I am one of the newest additions to the Board as well as the current newsletter editor. I work as a Psychologist in skilled nursing facilities via an organization called Senior Connections. I provide direct care for both short-term and long-term elderly and medically-fragile residents, as well as supervising Masters-level therapists in the same venue. A native Washingtonian, I was born in Everett, raised in Bellevue, and lived for over two decades in Kirkland before recently moving to Renton, where traffic is less mind-boggling!!

After earning a BA in French at the University of Washington back in the 1980s and working the next 15 years in the software industry, I made a radical, yet better-fitting career change. Re-aligning my sights more closely with an initial interest in psychology, I re-entered academia in my mid-30s, graduating with a PhD in Clinical Psychology in 2008. Now, instead of counting how many sick days I have left to use for “Mental Health days,” I actually enjoy going to work! The elderly population is a wonderfully grateful and humorous population to work for. My life continues to be enriched by my involvement with them.

My non-work interests are wide, including reading (an avid bibliophile since childhood, and my brother accused me of being a “hermit” instead of playing outside), vermicomposting since spring 2015 (using worms to turn food scraps into luscious, rich black dirt for gardening), and fusing glass into beautiful beads with my oxygen/propane torch. Traveling is another love of mine; our family first flew to Europe in 1975 where I was bit badly by the travel bug. I’ve made multiple forays since then back to Europe (particularly France) as well as to Thailand and India.

I joined the Coalition Board in July 2015 because I was impressed with this



small, dynamic group that emphasized taking practical action. I had assisted with one of Robin Shapiro’s Suicide Prevention seminars, sponsored by the Coalition, and found the group’s energy inspiring. Also, I liked their Mission and Vision emphasis on ethics:

*“The Washington State Coalition of Mental Health Professionals and Consumers is dedicated to advocating and supporting ethical mental health treatment. We promote mental health benefits as a vital component of standard medical care.”*

As a health care provider in a medical setting, I see firsthand how providing psychological support is as essential as the medicalized therapies for promoting healing and improving functionality. However, psychological treatments are still marginalized and restricted by insurers, and I’ve appreciated the Coalition’s steadfast support in working for equality on a systemic scale. If you are not yet a member of the Coalition, please consider joining. The dues are modest for professionals—and are FREE for consumers! Spread the word!

Recently, the National Association for Addiction Professionals (NAADAC) announced a grandfathering period for the Master Addiction Counselor credential. During this time the examination for Master Addiction Counselor (MAC) credential will be waived and the fee reduced to \$100.00. The grandfathering period ends May 31, 2016. The MAC credential is available to licensed Substance Use Disorders counselors or other professional counselors (social workers, mental health counselors, etc.) who meet the training and experience criteria.

Hopefully, there are licensed professionals in Washington state who will take advantage of this opportunity. The MAC has portability now in 21 states and will be expanding to more states in the near future. Both California and Oregon incorporate the MAC into their licensing criteria for Substance Abuse Counselors. Washington does not yet; however, under the recent draft rule change, possession of the MAC will allow one to qualify for the CDP.

Over the past 15 years, the addiction counseling field has made great strides toward professionalization as a specialty area. The Master Addiction Counselor criteria reflect this, so the opportunity offered by NAADAC to apply without testing is well worth taking advantage of if you qualify. Here are the requirements to be eligible for the MAC:

- Master's Degree or higher in Substance Use Disorders and/or related counseling subjects from a regionally accredited institution of higher learning.
- Current credential or license as a Substance Use Disorders or Professional Counselor (social worker, mental health, marriage and family, professional counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist, medical doctor) issued by a state or credentialing authority.
- At least three years full-time or 6,000 hours of supervised experience as a Substance Use Disorder counselor.
- At least 500 contact hours of education and training in Substance Use Disorders. Must include six hours of ethics training and six hours of HIV/AIDS-specific training within the last six years, all of which can be online.

Here is a link to information about the MAC: <http://www.naadac.org/NCCAP-MAC-grandfather-credential-offer>.



## WELCOME to all new Coalition members

from the Coalition Board!

Our membership has swelled over this past year, and the energy is inspiring! We want to welcome and acknowledge each of you.

Thank you, also, for your critical participation in the various surveys we have disseminated. Watch for upcoming surveys in 2016. Your direct member input is important.

You can see the Coalition is up to important activity, and we thank you for adding your support. Please invite your friends to join and make their voices heard!

Watch for **Call to Action** items related to supporting Parity efforts.

## Want to help?? Here's what we need!

We have had a wonderful and dedicated treasurer for the last 12 years, and it is time for her to dedicate some of her energy to other volunteer interests.

Several folks have asked how to help with Coalition efforts. If you can learn a simple book-keeping program, we would love to hear from you! We need someone to function as our treasurer, and Cynthia will gladly give you a tutorial! This is more of an organizational task vs super time-intensive. The board meets once a month on a Wed eve, and it is a terrific and dynamic group.

Thanks for considering it if you have those skills/interests! We would very much appreciate hearing from you.

Contact Sue Wiedenfeld at [swiedenfeld@me.com](mailto:swiedenfeld@me.com).

## Regence Campaign 2015, *continued*

creating six committees to develop position papers, run surveys, do press releases, create a social media campaign, educate the public, form ties with other mental health groups and consumer groups.

2. *Press releases* on the Regence behavioral health cuts were sent in August and September, resulting in a supportive article in the *Puget Sound Business Journal* in September (see article at Coalition website at [www.wacoalition.org](http://www.wacoalition.org)).
3. *Met with Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) in July, August, and September* on the Regence plan to merge reimbursement rates for 90834 and 90837 CPT codes, which was stopped. Regence then announced their plan to cut 90837 by 25%. The OIC said in October that they do not see reimbursement rates as part of their oversight. However, they are still concerned about “adequate networks” so would like to know when someone leaves the Regence panel (see below). The template for filing this letter is included following this article. [Additionally, the OIC is developing an Independent Review Organization (IRO) that will show which insurer has made treatment denials and will give another method to track where denials are occurring most frequently in 2016.]
4. *Met with the Attorney General’s Office (AGO) in October* about complaints regarding denied care for ERISA plans which they oversee, especially through the Non-Quantitative Treatment Limits (when treatment is denied for mental health but not for medical care) and when someone leaves the Regence panel. The process for filing complaints is found below.
5. *Met with the Health Care Authority (HCA) and Medicaid* in November to discuss the potential for Regence to have an inadequate network soon. HCA is the oversight agency for UMP and Medicaid. Dorothy Teeter, HCA Director, and MaryAnne Lindeblad, Medicaid Director, would like to know if anyone currently on the Regence network leaves in the near or longer term future. The process for filing complaints should be used to send this information.
6. *Two surveys of the mental health community* were conducted about their intentions to stay on the Regence panel. The first survey, in July, had 350 respondents, of which 75% were on the Regence panel. About 25% said they planned to leave the panel if the 30% cut of 90837 went into effect. About 25% more of Regence providers said that they might leave the panel. The second survey, in

November, had 75 respondents, of which about 60% were Regence providers. About 10% of those responding said that they had left the panel since October. Another 20% said they planned to leave the panel. Another 20% said they were considering leaving the panel. About 40% of all Regence providers said they planned to stay on the panel and work with current clients, but would not take any new Regence clients. To see full summaries of the surveys, go to the Coalition website ([www.wacoalition.org](http://www.wacoalition.org)).



Laura Groshong

7. *Five attempts to talk with Regence administrators* were made in the past six months without success.

Here are the continuing ways for YOU to oppose the reimbursement cut that was imposed by Regence for sessions using CPT code 90837 on December 1, 2015.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

- Send the letter below to AGO (if ERISA plan), OIC (if private plan), HCA (if state plan), and Medicaid (if Apple or other Medicaid plan), if needed mental health treatment is denied by Regence or any other insurer.
- Send the attached letter to AGO, OIC, HCA, and Medicaid if you decide to leave the Regence network.

### **Keep sending denials and appeals of needed mental health care to insurers and oversight agencies!**

Thanks to all who have participated in the efforts to get Regence to reconsider the proposed cuts.

The Coalition will continue this effort to protect mental health reimbursement.

*Continued on page 6*

*If you are not getting Emails about our events, please Email us with your CURRENT Email address:  
wacoalitionmhpc@gmail.com.  
This is the best way to get Coalition news.*

**LINKS to Oversight Agencies**

AGO - <http://www.atg.wa.gov/file-complaint>

Todd Bowers, Chief Litigator, Consumer Protection Division, Attorney General's Office

HCA – (Information) - <http://www.fuzeqna.com/hca/consumer/emailfaq.asp?kbid=255>

HCA – (Leadership) - Dorothy Teeter, Director, Health Care Authority – [Dorothy.teeter@hca.wa.gov](mailto:Dorothy.teeter@hca.wa.gov)

Dr. Dan Lessler, Chief Medical Officer – [dan.lessler@hca.wa.gov](mailto:dan.lessler@hca.wa.gov)

MaryAnne Lindeblad, Medicaid Director – [maryanne.lindeblad@hca.wa.gov](mailto:maryanne.lindeblad@hca.wa.gov)

HCA – (PEBB) - <http://www.fuzeqna.com/hca/ext/kb255-who-can-i-contact-to-express-my-complaints-or-concerns-regarding-the-public-employees-benefits-board-program?mode=browsebytopics>

OIC – (Information) - <http://www.insurance.wa.gov/your-insurance/health-insurance/providers-need-to-know/>

OIC - <http://www.insurance.wa.gov/complaints-and-fraud/file-a-complaint/>



**TEMPLATE to File Complaint with Insurer about Mental Health Coverage**

[Date]

[Name, email, and address of insurer]

Dear [insurer or representative of insurer]:

I am writing in response to your letter of \_\_\_\_ in which {name of insurer} denied the mental health treatment requested. Please consider this letter a precursor to my filing an appeal of the denied care.

So that I may provide an informed appeal, please provide me with a copy of my complete [insurer's name] file regarding my mental health treatment denial, including all internal emails, communications, memoranda, and other documents, so I can determine my next steps in the appeals process. Please provide those documents to me on an expedited basis, consistent with state and federal law. Also, please provide me with a complete copy of the Plan document, summary plan description, certificate of coverage or contract under which [my/my patient's] health benefits are provided as well.

Since [name of insurer] is a [state-regulated/ERISA] plan, I would like to point out that this denial may be at odds with state mental health parity laws. As you know, ERISA plans must comply with state parity laws that are stronger than the federal parity law, and Washington's parity law requires all insurers to cover any diagnosed condition found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV-TR. Additionally, these conditions must be covered to the same degree that medical/surgical conditions are covered.

Once I have received the above data, I will file a formal appeal.

Sincerely,

[Name and address of therapist/ Name and address of patient/both]

*(Continued on page 7)*

**TEMPLATE of Letter to AGO about Denials by ERISA Plans**

[Date]

<http://www.atg.wa.gov/file-complaint>

Todd Bowers, Chief Litigator  
Consumer Protection Division  
Attorney General's Office

Dear Mr. Bowers,

I am writing to inform you of a denial of needed mental health treatment that has been issued by \_\_\_\_\_, which runs a self-insured ERISA health care plan. As you are responsible for oversight of ERISA plans according to the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA), I am asking you to review this denial and consider the validity of the denial. This client needs continued psychotherapy to maintain/achieve mental health stability.

To protect the privacy of my client, I am leaving out identifiable information but would be happy to discuss this case with you by phone.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

[Name, email, phone, and address of therapist]

**TEMPLATE of Letter to OIC, AGO, HCA to Inform of Decision to Leave Regence Panel**

<http://www.atg.wa.gov/file-complaint>

Todd Bowers, Chief Litigator,  
Consumer Protection Division,  
Attorney General's Office

Dorothy Teeter, Director, Health Care Authority – [Dorothy.teeter@hca.wa.gov](mailto:Dorothy.teeter@hca.wa.gov)

Dr. Dan Lessler, Chief Medical Officer – [dan.lessler@hca.wa.gov](mailto:dan.lessler@hca.wa.gov)

MaryAnne Lindeblad, Medicaid Director – [naryanne.lindeblad@hca.wa.gov](mailto:naryanne.lindeblad@hca.wa.gov)

<http://www.insurance.wa.gov/complaints-and-fraud/file-a-complaint/>

[Date]

To Whom it May Concern:

This is to inform you that I will be leaving/have left the Regence Behavioral Health Panel as of \_\_\_\_\_.

I bring this to your attention so that you can consider whether Regence has/will have an adequate network in providing mental health services.

Sincerely,

[Name, email, phone, and address of therapist]

# Join the Coalition

## The Coalition of Mental Health Professionals and Consumers

P. O. Box 30087 • Seattle, Washington 98113-2087  
206-444-4304 • <http://www.wacoalition.org>

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 website, a Helpline, the newsletter, brochures, and our on-line member directory.

**Thank you for your continued support! It makes possible what we do. Please renew promptly. With this year's renewal, you will be included in our on-line directory.**

Send this form to:  
THE COALITION, ATTN: MEMBERSHIP  
P. O. Box 30087 • Seattle, WA 98113-2087

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_\_\_\_ Type of License \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS (if different from last renewal) \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE Work (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

### LOCATION OF PRACTICE

City \_\_\_\_\_  
Neighborhood \_\_\_\_\_

### PROBLEMS TREATED

- \_\_\_\_ Abuse
- \_\_\_\_ Addiction
- \_\_\_\_ Anxiety/Depression
- \_\_\_\_ Bipolar
- \_\_\_\_ Grief and Loss
- \_\_\_\_ LBGTQ
- \_\_\_\_ Learning Issue
- \_\_\_\_ Medical Issues/Pain Managements
- \_\_\_\_ PTSD
- \_\_\_\_ Relationships
- \_\_\_\_ Stress
- \_\_\_\_ Work/Career

### SPECIALTIES

- \_\_\_\_ Elders
- \_\_\_\_ Adults
- \_\_\_\_ Adolescents
- \_\_\_\_ Children
- \_\_\_\_ Infants
- \_\_\_\_ Family
- \_\_\_\_ Couples

### PREFERRED TREATMENTS

- \_\_\_\_ Psychoanalytic
- \_\_\_\_ Cognitive-Behavioral
- \_\_\_\_ Interpersonal
- \_\_\_\_ Eclectic
- \_\_\_\_ EMDR
- \_\_\_\_ Somatic Transformation

\_\_\_\_ Please check if you do not want to be included in the 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:

#### Professional Membership:

\_\_\_\_ \$65      \_\_\_\_ \$115      \_\_\_\_ \$250

#### Student Membership:

\_\_\_\_ \$15      \_\_\_\_ \$25      \_\_\_\_ \$65

Consumer Membership: FREE!

Renew Online at <http://www.wacoalition.org/renew.php>

**THANK YOU** for supporting **THE COALITION**