

University of Massachusetts Medical School
 Community Health Clerkship
Health Advocacy

RURAL (AND RESORT) MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES AND SERVICES

Advocacy Organizations	
What are some Local organizations that do advocacy work?	MV Community Services, Health Care Access
What are some State level organizations that do advocacy work?	Department of Social Services, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services
What are some National level organizations that do advocacy work?	NAMI-C.A.R.E (currently being organized), DARE
What are some International organizations that do advocacy work?	World Health Organization's Management of Substance Abuse Team
Advocacy Issue	
Looking at the State, National, and/or International level, at the websites or information from the organizations above, what is a major area of advocacy at this time? <i>Try to choose an advocacy issue that will in some way affect the local community.</i> Advocacy specifically refers to promoting legislation, policies or specific budgetary appropriations that positively affect a health issue. This may occur through decreasing barriers to accessing health services, providing an infrastructure conducive to effective health promotion programs, or directly increasing the resources and infrastructure of the public health system.	Recognition of dual diagnosis as a critical clinical issue that needs to be addressed; increased equity in health care for people with mental health and substance abuse issues.
What specific law, policy or appropriation is being advocated for?	H.R. 1424: Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007. It will amend section 712 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, section 2705 of the Public Health Service Act, and section 9812 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require equity in the provision of mental health and substance-related disorder benefits under group health plans.
Which organizations are doing the advocating?	NAMI, American Society of Addiction Medicine, American Congress of Community Support and Employment Services, Faces and Voices of Recovery, Mental Health America
Who is being lobbied?	State Representatives and the following specific committees: House Energy and Commerce Committee, House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, House Education and Labor Committee, House Education and Labor Subcommittee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; House Ways and Means Committee, House Ways and Means Subcommittee of Health.

Whom will this issue affect?	People with mental health and/or addiction issues that have group health insurance plans/coverage.
Were they or will they (in your opinion) be successful?	Yes, although more work needs to be done to assure equitable health care services for all, not just for people with health care plans/coverage.
Why or why not? What do they need to be more successful?	This act should be successful because it prohibits treatment limits or the imposition of financial requirements on mental health and substance-related disorder benefits in group health plans which are not similarly imposed on most medical and surgical benefits. In today's America, more and more constituents will benefit from this act, which targets the cost of and access to health insurance coverage, the quality of health care, Medicare, Medicaid, and state and local mental health and substance abuse treatment spending, and spending on public services.
What are the consequences if they are not successful?	The consequences are the continued lack of equity in services between mental health and addiction issues compared with different groups of illnesses. This can propagate the myth that there is a difference in health care standards between mental health issues/addiction issues and other medical/surgical issues.
If they are not successful, what other strategies can be used to achieve the same goal?	Try to pass a similar bill again, using different language. Continue to work with advocacy groups to increase the visibility of inequity of care for people with mental health and/or addiction issues.
How can physicians and/or nurses be involved in this advocacy issue?	They can contact their local representatives either by phone, mail, or email; they can assist their clients in contacting their representatives; they can advocate for equity within their own practices; they can support advocacy groups.