

## **MENTAL HEALTH PARITY and ADDICTION EQUITY ACT OF 2008 (MHPAEA)**

The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA) was signed into law October 3, 2008. The law becomes effective as early as October 3, 2009 but there are extensions for collectively bargained plans.

With this change in the law, coverage for mental health and addiction services must be no more restrictive than a Plan's medical benefits in terms of deductibles, co-payments, number of visits and days of coverage. The change is important in that it promotes equitable treatment for patients with mental health conditions, but for unmanaged plans the cost of this expanded coverage can be significant.

### **Alicare Medical Management Can Help Control Costs and Assure Proper Treatment**

While plans must adapt their mental health coverage to match their medical coverage, medical necessity rules still apply. Alicare Medical Management provides a broad range of behavioral health care management programs that can help plans control the costs of mental health and addiction treatment while assuring that their members get appropriate care. Our outstanding service and commitment to excellence have been consistently recognized through multiple accreditations from URAC. Even if your plan does not yet have to meet the requirements of MHPAEA, implementing a program now to control the costs of mental health coverage is prudent and will provide the least disruption when complying with MHPAEA.

Our approach to health care cost management reflects our belief that quality care management is patient focused, providing the best care for each patient within the framework of evidence-based medical guidelines and appropriate costs.

Our services can help your plan provide the most appropriate care to your members while controlling the costs of the new plan design changes mandated by the MHPAEA. Whether or not your group is already a client of Alicare Medical Management for other services, we can help you select services tailored to address the impact of the MHPAEA requirements. These services include:

#### **Utilization Management/Precertification of Hospital Treatment**

Alicare Medical Management's Utilization Management Program provides clinical review designed to promote appropriate utilization of hospitals and inpatient treatment centers. With the many specific limits on mental health treatment removed under MHPAEA, unmanaged inpatient stays can potentially be as lengthy as your plan's full hospitalization coverage. We rely on our psychiatric nurses and a panel of psychiatrists, psychologists and other clinicians to help monitor behavioral health hospitalizations for appropriateness of admission, length of stay and appropriate treatment sites. Our services are available 24/7, 365 days a year to meet patient needs and facilitate turnaround times that meet all state, Department of Labor and URAC requirements. While typical mental health and addiction programs have 30 day lengths of stay, our average length of stay for mental health and addiction cases have historically been less than eight days. We specialize in obtaining alternative care that meets patient needs including intensive outpatient programs, day treatment and outpatient therapy. We will work with whatever network your plan utilizes to place members with their network's facilities and providers.

## Precertification of Outpatient Treatment

Limits on outpatient mental health treatment that currently apply to a plan must now match the medical plan. For most plans, this can mean that mental health treatment is limited only by overall plan maximums. Validating the medical necessity of continuing outpatient mental health treatment can help control the costs of ongoing treatment. As with hospitalization care, treatment recommendations are made in conjunction with the patient's provider by trained mental health clinicians.

## Case Management

By working directly with patients, their families and their physicians, our nurses and physicians will coordinate care for patients with intensive mental health needs. Case managers seek out and negotiate the best possible prices for authorized care while promoting optimal outcomes for patients.

## 24 Hour NurseLine

Our nurses are available around the clock to speak with callers to answer health questions, triage their symptoms and provide immediate recommendations including directing them to appropriate in network care.

Alicare Medical Management can help you and your members navigate the new Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 to ensure that your members are receiving the best care while protecting your plan's assets.

For more information about our behavioral health care management programs, please call Janice Blattenberger at 1-800-863-8688.

## About Alicare Medical Management

Alicare Medical Management is a national leader in delivering customized medical cost management solutions that promote cost effectiveness, patient satisfaction and optimal medical outcomes. Our exceptional service and commitment to excellence have been consistently recognized through multiple distinct accreditations from URAC. Alicare Medical Management believes that quality care management is patient centric, providing the best care for each patient within the framework of evidence based medical guidelines and appropriate costs.

## About Amalgamated Life Insurance

Amalgamated Life Insurance, America's Labor Insurance Company®, was founded in 1943, to protect the financial well being of working men and women and their families.

The Company has received an "A" (Excellent) rating from A.M. Best Company for 34 consecutive years. Amalgamated Life and its affiliates are full-service providers of insured and self-insured employee benefit plans with over \$800 million in annual premium equivalencies and fee-for service revenues.

*This announcement is not meant to take the place of any legal advice concerning mandates imposed by law. If you have any questions concerning your legal obligations you should seek advice from your legal counsel.*

## Alicare Medical Management is an affiliate of Amalgamated Life Insurance

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