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CARD SECURES UPDATED GUIDANCE ENSURING MENTAL HEALTH PARITY FOR MEDI-CAL CHILDREN

New guidance from California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) underscores Governor Newsom’s and CARD’s commitment to increase compliance with mental health parity laws.

WOODLAND HILLS, Calif. – (Jan. 22, 2020) – California’s Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) recently released [updated guidance](#) to the managed care plans who administer benefits for Medi-Cal beneficiaries. The updated guidance clarifies that the plans must comply with the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA). MHPAEA prohibits limitations for mental health services from being more restrictive than limits for medical/surgical services. This updated guidance helps ensure access to critical autism treatment services.

Since 2014, when California began covering behavioral health treatment for its pediatric Medi-Cal population diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), the [Center for Autism and Related Disorders](#) (CARD) has worked with [Autism Speaks](#) and the [Autism Legal Resource Center](#) to secure guidance from DHCS stating that Medi-Cal’s children with ASD are protected by MHPAEA. . Without this clarification from DHCS, some managed care plans have imposed conditions, such as parent participation requirements, that put Medi-Cal benefits out of reach for some families.

“This guidance will make autism treatment more accessible to our most vulnerable children,” said CARD Vice President of Government Relations Julie Kornack. “Governor Newsom’s commitment to mental health parity is clear, and this policy change will make a real difference for our families.”

When not applied to substantially all medical/surgical services, some of the policies and practices prohibited by MHPAEA include hour and visit limits, parent/caregiver participation requirements, treatment plan templates, location exclusions, standards for network participation, including reimbursement rates that result in limited or no access to treatment, and plan methods for determining usual, customary, and reasonable charges.

About Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD)

Center for Autism Related Disorders (CARD) is the world’s largest provider of evidence-based autism treatment, providing services to individuals of all ages who are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) at treatment centers around the globe. CARD was founded in 1990 by leading autism expert and clinical psychologist Doreen Granpeesheh, PhD, BCBA-D. CARD treats individuals with ASD using the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA), which is



empirically proven to be the most effective method for treating individuals with ASD and recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the US Surgeon General. For more information, visit www.centerforautism.com or call (855) 345-2273.

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