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The White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 29, 2016

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Presidential Memorandum -- Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force



March 29, 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR THE HEADS OF EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND
AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force

My Administration has made behavioral health a priority and taken a number of steps to improve the prevention, early intervention, and treatment of mental health and substance use disorders. These actions are especially important in light of the prescription drug abuse and heroin epidemic as well as the suicide and substance use-related fatalities that have reversed increases in longevity in certain populations. One important response has been the expansion and implementation of mental health and substance use disorder parity protections to ensure that coverage for these benefits is comparable to coverage for medical and surgical care. The Affordable Care Act builds on the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act to expand mental health and substance use disorder benefits and Federal parity protections for more than 60 million Americans. To realize the promise of coverage expansion and parity protections in helping individuals with mental health and substance use disorders, executive departments and agencies need to work together to ensure that Americans are benefiting from the Federal parity protections the law intends. To that end, I hereby direct the following:

Section 1. Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force. There is established an interagency Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force (Task Force), which will identify and promote best practices for executive departments and agencies (agencies), as well as State agencies, to better ensure compliance with and implementation of requirements related to mental health and substance use disorder parity, and determine areas that would benefit from further guidance. The Director of the Domestic Policy Council shall serve as Chair of the Task Force.

(a) Membership of the Task Force. In addition to the Director of the Domestic Policy Council, the Task Force shall consist of the heads of the following agencies and offices, or their designees:

- (i) the Department of the Treasury;
- (ii) the Department of Defense;
- (iii) the Department of Justice;
- (iv) the Department of Labor;
- (v) the Department of Health and Human Services;
- (vi) the Department of Veterans Affairs;

- (vii) the Office of Personnel Management;
- (viii) the Office of National Drug Control Policy; and
- (ix) such other agencies or offices as the President may designate.

At the request of the Chair, the Task Force may establish subgroups consisting exclusively of Task Force members or their designees under this section, as appropriate.

(b) Administration of the Task Force. The Department of Health and Human Services shall provide funding and administrative support for the Task Force to the extent permitted by law and within existing appropriations.

Sec. 2. Mission and Functions of the Task Force. The Task Force shall coordinate across agencies to:

- (a) identify and promote best practices for compliance and implementation;
- (b) identify and address gaps in guidance, particularly with regard to substance use disorder parity; and
- (c) implement actions during its tenure and at its conclusion to advance parity in mental health and substance use disorder treatment.

Sec. 3. Outreach. Consistent with the objectives set out in section 2 of this memorandum, the Task Force, in accordance with applicable law, shall conduct outreach to patients, consumer advocates, health care providers, specialists in mental health care and substance use disorder treatment, employers, insurers, State regulators, and other stakeholders as the Task Force deems appropriate.

Sec. 4. Transparency and Reports. The Task Force shall present to the President a report before October 31, 2016, on its findings and recommendations, which shall be made public.

Sec. 5. General Provisions. (a) The heads of agencies shall assist and provide information to the Task Force, consistent with applicable law, as may be necessary to carry out the functions of the Task Force.

(b) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

- (i) the authority granted by law to an executive department, agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(c) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(d) This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

(e) The Secretary of Health and Human Services is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the Federal Register.

BARACK OBAMA



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