
STATEMENT

**From Mark Covall, President/CEO,
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems**

on introduction of S.3028,
The Medicare Mental Health Inpatient Equity Act

February 25, 2010

Yesterday Sens. John Kerry (D-MA) and Olympia Snowe (R-ME) introduced the *Medicare Mental Health Inpatient Equity Act* (S.3028), a measure that is intended to eliminate discriminatory coverage policies in Medicare.

Ending discrimination in all its forms is the right thing to do. We applaud Sens. Kerry and Snowe for their leadership in introducing this important legislation, which builds on the historic laws Congress has already passed (including the *Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act* and the *Medicare Mental Health Copayment Equity Act*).

Stigma and discrimination against people with mental illnesses still exist in the Medicare program because Medicare beneficiaries continue to be limited to 190 days of inpatient psychiatric hospital care during their lifetime. This lifetime limit does not apply to psychiatric units in general hospitals, and there is no such lifetime limit for any other Medicare specialty inpatient hospital service.

S.3028 would eliminate the 190-day lifetime limit for Medicare beneficiaries receiving care in a psychiatric hospital. NAPHS strongly urges Congress to pass the *Medicare Mental Health Inpatient Equity Act* to end one of the remaining barriers to equal access and coverage for Medicare beneficiaries. Eliminating the 190-day lifetime limit will equalize Medicare mental health coverage with private health insurance coverage and expand beneficiaries' choice of inpatient psychiatric care providers. By increasing access for the most seriously ill, this measure will help to improve continuity of care and will create a more cost-effective Medicare program.

NOTE: The bill is supported by a broad coalition of 48 national organizations including the National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems (NAPHS) as well as the AARP, American Hospital Association, American Nurses Association, American Psychiatric Association, Federation of American Hospitals, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), National Council on Aging, and Mental Health America, among others.