



701 13th Street, NW, Suite 950
Washington, DC 20005-3903
Phone: 202/393-6700
Fax: 202/783-6041
E-mail: naphs@naphs.org
Web: www.naphs.org

**STATEMENT
on the death of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA)**

Mark Covall
President and CEO
National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems

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On behalf of the members and staff of the National Association of Psychiatric Health Systems (NAPHS), I would like to express deepest sympathies to the family of Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, who died yesterday.

Sen. Kennedy was a staunch and unwavering supporter of mental health. He was a champion for fairness and equality, who knew how to work with his congressional colleagues to make change happen.

Millions of Americans of all ages now have assurance of equal coverage for mental and physical disorders, thanks to passage of landmark mental health parity legislation last year. Sen. Kennedy was a leader in bringing the disparate views of business, consumers and families, insurers, and providers to the table to achieve this legislative breakthrough. This legislation is critical to ensuring that – as healthcare reform evolves – behavioral health is recognized as integral to overall health.

As chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, Sen. Kennedy touched the lives of virtually every American through his work on issues as diverse as Medicare, Medicaid, and children's issues.

We join all Americans in mourning the loss of a great American leader.