WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §33-24-7U

§33-24-7u. Mental health parity.

(a) As used in this section, the following words and phrases have the meaning given them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

To the extent that coverage is provided "behavioral health, mental health, and substance use disorder" means a condition or disorder, regardless of etiology, that may be the result of a combination of genetic and environmental factors and that falls under any of the diagnostic categories listed in the mental disorders section of the most recent version of:

(1) The International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems;

(2) The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders; or

(3) The Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health and Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood; and

Includes autism spectrum disorder: *Provided*, That any service, even if it is related to the behavioral health, mental health, or substance use disorder diagnosis if medical in nature, shall be reviewed as a medical claim and undergo all utilization review as applicable.

(b) The carrier is required to provide coverage for the prevention of, screening for, and treatment of behavioral health, mental health, and substance use disorders that is no less extensive than the coverage provided for any physical illness and that complies with the requirements of this section. This screening shall include, but is not limited to, unhealthy alcohol use for adults, substance use for adults and adolescents, and depression screening for adolescents and adults.

(c) The carrier shall:

(1) Include coverage and reimbursement for behavioral health screenings using a validated screening tool for behavioral health, which coverage and reimbursement is no less extensive than the coverage and reimbursement for the annual physical examination;

(2) Comply with the nonquantitative treatment limitation requirements specified in 45 CFR §146.136(c)(4), or any successor regulation, regarding any limitations that are not expressed numerically but otherwise limit the scope or duration of benefits for treatment, which in addition to the limitations and examples listed in 45 CFR §146.136(c)(4)(ii) and (c)(4)(iii), or any successor regulation and 78 FR 68246, include the methods by which the carrier establishes and maintains its provider network and responds to deficiencies in the ability of its networks to provide timely access to care;

(3) Comply with the financial requirements and quantitative treatment limitations specified

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in 45 CFR §146.136(c)(2) and (c)(3), or any successor regulation;

(4) Not apply any nonquantitative treatment limitations to benefits for behavioral health, mental health, and substance use disorders that are not applied to medical and surgical benefits within the same classification of benefits;

(5) Establish procedures to authorize treatment with a nonparticipating provider if a covered service is not available within established time and distance standards and within a reasonable period after service is requested, and with the same coinsurance, deductible, or copayment requirements as would apply if the service were provided at, a participating provider;

(6) If a covered person obtains a covered service from a nonparticipating provider because the covered service is not available within the established time and distance standards, reimburse treatment or services for behavioral health, mental health, or substance use disorders required to be covered pursuant to this subsection that are provided by a nonparticipating provider using the same methodology that the carrier uses to reimburse covered medical services provided by nonparticipating providers and, upon request, provide evidence of the methodology to the person or provider.

(d) If the carrier offers a plan that does not cover services provided by an out-of-network provider, it may provide the benefits required in subsection (c) of this section if the services are rendered by a provider who is designated by and affiliated with the carrier only if the same requirements apply for services for a physical illness.

(e) In the event of a concurrent review for a claim for coverage of services for the prevention of, screening for, and treatment of behavioral health, mental health, and substance use disorders, the service continues to be a covered service until the carrier notifies the covered person of the determination of the claim.

(f) Unless denied for nonpayment of premium, a denial of reimbursement for services for the prevention of, screening for, or treatment of behavioral health, mental health, and substance use disorders by the carrier must include the following language:

(1) A statement explaining that covered persons are protected under this section, which provides that limitations placed on the access to mental health and substance use disorder benefits may be no greater than any limitations placed on access to medical and surgical benefits;

(2) A statement providing information about the Consumer Services Division of the Office of the West Virginia Insurance Commissioner if the covered person believes his or her rights under this section have been violated; and

(3) A statement specifying that covered persons are entitled, upon request to the carrier, to a copy of the medical necessity criteria for any behavioral health, mental health, and

substance use disorder benefit.

(g) On or after June 1, 2021, and annually thereafter, the Insurance Commissioner shall submit a written report to the Joint Committee on Government and Finance that contains the following information regarding plans offered pursuant to this section:

(1) Data that demonstrates parity compliance for adverse determination regarding claims for behavioral health, mental health, or substance use disorder services and includes the total number of adverse determinations for such claims;

(2) A description of the process used to develop and select:

(A) The medical necessity criteria used in determining benefits for behavioral health, mental health, and substance use disorders; and

(B) The medical necessity criteria used in determining medical and surgical benefits;

(3) Identification of all nonquantitative treatment limitations that are applied to benefits for behavioral health, mental health, and substance use disorders and to medical and surgical benefits within each classification of benefits; and

(4) The results of analyses demonstrating that, for medical necessity criteria described in subdivision (2) of this subsection and for each nonquantitative treatment limitation identified in subdivision (3) of this subsection, as written and in operation, the processes, strategies, evidentiary standards, or other factors used in applying the medical necessity criteria and each nonquantitative treatment limitation to benefits for behavioral health, mental health, and substance use disorders within each classification of benefits are comparable to, and are applied no more stringently than, the processes, strategies, evidentiary standards, or other factors used in applying the medical necessity criteria and each nonquantitative treatment limitation to medical and surgical benefits within the corresponding classification of benefits.

(5) The Insurance Commissioner’s report of the analyses regarding nonquantitative treatment limitations shall include at a minimum:

(A) Identifying factors used to determine whether a nonquantitative treatment limitation will apply to a benefit, including factors that were considered but rejected;

(B) Identify and define the specific evidentiary standards used to define the factors and any other evidence relied on in designing each nonquantitative treatment limitation;

(C) Provide the comparative analyses, including the results of the analyses, performed to determine that the processes and strategies used to design each nonquantitative treatment limitation, as written, and the written processes and strategies used to apply each nonquantitative treatment limitation for benefits for behavioral health, mental health, and substance use disorders are comparable to, and are applied no more stringently than, the

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processes and strategies used to design and apply each nonquantitative treatment limitation, as written, and the written processes and strategies used to apply each nonquantitative treatment limitation for medical and surgical benefits;

(D) Provide the comparative analyses, including the results of the analyses, performed to determine that the processes and strategies used to apply each nonquantitative treatment limitation, in operation, for benefits for behavioral health, mental health, and substance use disorders are comparable to, and are applied no more stringently than, the processes and strategies used to apply each nonquantitative treatment limitation, in operation, for medical and surgical benefits; and

(E) Disclose the specific findings and conclusions reached by the Insurance Commissioner that the results of the analyses indicate that each health benefit plan offered pursuant to this section complies with subsection (c) of this section.

(h) The Insurance Commissioner shall adopt legislative rules to comply with the provisions of this section. These rules shall specify the information and analyses that carriers shall provide to the Insurance Commissioner necessary for the commissioner to complete the report described in subsection (g) of this section and shall delineate the format in which carriers shall submit such information and analyses. These rules or amendments to rules shall be proposed pursuant to the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code within the applicable time limit to be considered by the Legislature during its regular session in the year 2021. The rules shall require that each carrier first submit the report to the Insurance Commissioner no earlier than one year after the rules are promulgated, and any year thereafter during which the carrier makes significant changes to how it designs and applies medical management protocols.

(i) This section is effective for policies, contracts, plans or agreements, beginning on or after January 1, 2021. This section applies to all policies, contracts, plans, or agreements, subject to this article that are delivered, executed, issued, amended, adjusted, or renewed in this state on or after the effective date of this section.

(j) The Insurance Commissioner shall enforce this section and may conduct a financial examination of the carrier to determine if it is in compliance with this section, including, but not limited to, a review of policies and procedures and a sample of mental health claims to determine these claims are treated in parity with medical and surgical benefits. The results of this examination shall be reported to the Legislature. If the Insurance Commissioner determines that the carrier is not in compliance with this section, the Insurance Commissioner may fine the carrier in conformity with the fines established in the legislative rule.

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