

Federal parity tied to lower out of pocket mental health spending

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(HealthDay)—Federal parity under the Mental Health Parity and

Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) is associated with lower average annual out-of-pocket (OOP) mental health spending among children with mental health conditions, according to a study published in the August issue of *Pediatrics*.

Alene Kennedy-Hendricks, Ph.D., from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, and colleagues used a difference-in-differences approach to compare commercially insured children aged 3 to 18 years in 2008 who were continuously enrolled in plans newly subject to parity under MHPAEA with those enrolled in plans never subject to parity. Mental health service use and spending outcomes were assessed.

The researchers found that parity was associated with \$140 lower average annual OOP mental health spending among children with [mental health conditions](#) who were enrolled in plans subject to parity, an amount that was lower than expected given changes in the comparison group. Parity was associated with \$234 lower average annual OOP mental health spending among children who were in the ≥ 85 th percentile in total mental health spending.

"MHPAEA was associated with increased financial protection on average for children with mental [health](#) conditions and among those at the higher end of the spending distribution," the authors write.

"Estimated reductions in OOP [spending](#) were likely too modest to have substantially reduced financial burden on families of children with particularly high [mental health](#) expenditures."

One author disclosed financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry.

More information: [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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