

## THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

**Studies find that an estimated 70 to 80 percent of children with mental disorders go without care (Koppelman, et al., 2004).<sup>5</sup>**

When children with untreated mental disorders become adults, they use more health care services and incur higher health care costs than other adults. Left untreated, childhood disorders are likely to persist and lead to a downward spiral of school failure, limited or non-existent employment opportunities and poverty in adulthood. No other illnesses harm so many children so seriously (National Alliance on Mental Health, 2003).<sup>1</sup>

Approximately 50% of students age 14 and older who are living with a mental illness drop out of high school. This is the highest dropout rate of any disability group ( U.S. Department of Education, Twenty-third annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Washington, D.C., 2001).<sup>3</sup>

## Half of all lifetime cases of mental disorders begin by age 14 (National Alliance on Mental Health).<sup>2</sup>

### FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 requires insurance groups offering coverage for mental health or substance use disorders to make these benefits comparable to general medical coverage.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA), effective January 2014, builds on the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 to require behavioral health coverage equal to primary care coverage. As part of ACA, enrollment for insurance options on the Colorado exchange began October 1st and ends March 31, 2014. Money was set aside in the budget to hire navigators across the state to help people enroll and find the best insurance options for each individual. To visit Colorado's health insurance market place go to <http://www.connectforhealthco.com/>.

Uninterrupted Scholars Act (USA), effective January 14, 2013, amends FERPA so that child welfare professionals have better access to school records. To learn more visit <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/uninterrupted-scholars-act-Q-and-A.pdf>.

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, effective October 2008, requires that county case workers must work with schools to write education into youth and adolescent treatment plans.

### Other possible legislative opportunities:

The Obama Administration has taken steps to raise awareness about the need to help educators recognize and refer students who show signs of mental illness.

- "President Obama's proposed budget for 2014 would allocate \$205 million for mental health programs, including training teachers to recognize signs of mental illness, and implementing programs to improve school climate and well-being for all students."<sup>7</sup>

About one in five children suffers from an emotional or behavioral problem in which their symptoms meet the psychiatric community's criteria for a diagnosable disorder. Half of this group lives with a disorder that is significantly impairing (Koppelman, et al., 2004).<sup>4</sup>

The World Health Organization says more than 350 million people worldwide have depression and predicts that by 2020, the disorder will rival heart disease as the illness with the highest global disease burden (Reuters, 2012).<sup>6</sup>

## REFERENCES

1. New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. (2003). Achieving the promise: transforming mental health care in America. (2003). Final Report. DHHS Pub. No. SMA-0303832. Rockville, MD
2. NAMI | Facts on Children's Mental Health in America. (n.d.). NAMI: National Alliance on Mental Illness - Mental Health Support, Education and Advocacy. Retrieved from <http://www.nami.org>
3. U.S. Department of Education, Twenty-third annual report to Congress on the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Washington, D.C., 2001
4. Koppelman, J., Jones, J.M., Coberly, S., and Martineau, M. (2004). Children with mental disorders: making sense of their needs and the systems that help them. National Health Policy Forum issue brief, 799, The George Washington University.
5. Koppelman, J., Jones, J.M., Coberly, S., and Martineau, M. (2004). Children with mental disorders: making sense of their needs and the systems that help them. National Health Policy Forum issue brief, 799, The George Washington University.
6. Kelland, K. (n.d.). Experts call for mental illness screening for children. Reuters. Business & Financial News, Breaking US & International News Reuters.com. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/28/us-depression-teenagers-screening-idUSBRE8AR1E820121128>
7. Adams, J. (2013). President Obama calls on teachers to help identify mental health disorders in students. Retrieved from <http://www.edsource.org/today/2013/president-obama-calls-on-teachers-to-help-identify-mental-health-disorders-seek-help-for-students/32959#.UegJtl21FGw>