

**Working Group Regarding
Treatment and Coverage of Substance Abuse
Disorders and Mental Illness**



Annual Report

Produced by:

State of Illinois

Department of Insurance



Illinois Department of Insurance

JB Pritzker
Governor

Ann Gillespie
Acting Director

December 27, 2024

To the Honorable Members of the General Assembly:

The Department of Insurance (DOI) is pleased to submit its Annual Report of the Working Group Regarding Treatment and Coverage of Substance Abuse Disorders and Mental Illness as required by The Heroin Crisis Act (Public Act 99-0480) and specifically pursuant to 215 ILCS 5/370c.1(h)(2).

215 ILCS 5/370c.1(h)(2) requires the DOI, in coordination with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, to convene a working group of health care insurance carriers, mental health advocacy groups, substance abuse patient advocacy groups, and mental health physician groups for the purpose of discussing issues related to the treatment and coverage of substance abuse disorders and mental illness. 215 ILCS 5/370c.1(h)(2) required the Working Group to meet once before January 1, 2016, and semiannually thereafter.

The attached Annual Report to the General Assembly includes a list of the health care insurance carriers, mental health advocacy groups, substance abuse patient advocacy groups, and mental health physician groups that participated in the Working Group meetings, details on the issues and topics covered, and legislative recommendations as required by statute.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann Gillespie
Acting Director

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Working Group Regarding Treatment and Coverage of Substance Abuse Disorders and Mental Illness

Annual Report

In 2015, Public Act 99-0480 (The Heroin Crisis Act) created a Working Group with the stated purpose of discussing issues related to the treatment and coverage of substance abuse disorders and mental illness. The specific statutory language that established the Working Group can be found in Appendix A.

The Illinois Department of Insurance (DOI) manages the oversight of and provides staff support for the Working Group in coordination with the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) and the Department of Public Health (DPH). The Working Group meets in accordance with the Illinois Open Meetings Act. Meeting Agendas and Approved Minutes are available on the DOI website at insurance.illinois.gov.

DOI's ultimate goal for the Working Group is to learn what type of education is still needed and to accurately determine where to devote resources. Working Group meeting participants are encouraged to use the DOI for assistance, to convene meetings, and to have conversations.

Working Group Participants

- Health care insurance carriers
- Mental health advocacy groups
- Substance use patient advocacy groups
- Mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers
- Representatives from relevant state regulatory and human service agencies

Working Group meetings covered in this 2023 Annual Report

- July 12, 2024, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. CT
- November 15, 2024, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. CT

Meeting Locations

Both the July 12, 2024, and November 15, 2024, meetings were held via WebEx conference call.

July 12, 2024, meeting

Andi VanderKolk with the Department of Insurance gave a brief update on behalf DOI.

Brian Gorman with Get Covered Illinois noted that the Department is currently running our second annual mental health (MHP) parity ad campaign which started May 1 to kick off Mental Health Awareness Month. The radio, digital, transit (trains, buses and bus stops and stations) and social media ads will run in multiple markets state-wide, including Chicago, Springfield, Rockford, and Peoria to raise awareness about mental health parity. The campaign will run through the end of September. This year, the consumer education campaign introduced a new animated character named Yarney to help consumers better understand their rights related to health insurance coverage for mental health and substance use disorders, under the Mental

Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA). The campaign ads direct consumers to an informational page about mental health parity and includes several educational videos featuring Yarney. There were no questions from agency staff or guests.

No other agencies provided an update during this meeting.

November 15, 2024, meeting

Matt Pickett with the Department of Insurance gave a brief update on behalf DOI. He noted that the Department's second annual mental health (MHP) parity ad campaign ended on September 30th. The radio, digital, transit (trains, buses and bus stops and stations) and social media ads ran in multiple markets state-wide, including Chicago, Springfield, Rockford, Peoria, and the Metro East to raise awareness about mental health parity. This year, the consumer education campaign introduced a new animated character named Yarney to help consumers better understand their rights related to health insurance coverage for mental health and substance use disorders under the federal Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA).

The campaign ads direct consumers to an informational page about mental health parity and includes several educational videos featuring Yarney, the ad campaign's new mascot.

Brian Gorman with Get Covered Illinois provided updates on future MHP ad campaigns and efforts. He provided a brief overview of the first two years of the campaign and noted that DOI has taken a brief pause due to the open enrollment period and planning for the new state-based exchange. DOI is considering how the campaign plays into its overall efforts. DOI has printed and distributed materials, and the materials are part of the navigator toolkit. This will help consumers learn more about enrollment, access to care, and their rights under the law. There were no questions from agency staff or meeting guests.

Matt provided two additional updates. First – the federal government released new mental health parity rules on 9/9/2024. Matt can circulate the rules to any interested parties, but he noted the rules mostly dealt with NQTLs and their application(s) and protecting consumers seeking care. Second – DOI has worked in conjunction with DHS to create a Naloxone landing page on the DOI website. The page gives information on Naloxone coverage, provides contact information for the DOI help center, and links to DHS's website for additional informational materials.

No other agencies provided an update during this meeting.

Legislative Recommendations and/or Considerations

The working group did not finalize any specific legislative recommendations or considerations during either the July 12, 2024, or November 15, 2024, meetings.

Appendix A

Statutory Language Creating the Working Group

215 ILCS 5/370c.1(h)(2)

The Department, in coordination with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Healthcare and Family Services, shall convene a working group of health care insurance carriers, mental health advocacy groups, substance abuse patient advocacy groups, and mental health physician groups for the purpose of discussing issues related to the treatment and coverage of substance abuse disorders and mental illness. The working group shall meet once before January 1, 2016, and shall meet semiannually thereafter. The Department shall issue an annual report to the General Assembly that includes a list of the health care insurance carriers, mental health advocacy groups, substance abuse patient advocacy groups, and mental health physician groups that participated in the working group meetings, details on the issues and topics covered, and any legislative recommendations.

Appendix B

Working Group Attendees

2024 Working Group Meeting Agency Staff Participants

Dante Casamento	DOI
Twyla Davis	DOI
Adam Flores	DOI
Daniel Frey	DOI
Brian Gorman	DOI
Matthew Pickett	DOI
Andi VanderKolk	DOI
Theresa Eagleson	HFS
Eric Foster	HFS
Andre Jordan	DHS

July 12, 2024, Working Group Meeting Participants

N/A

November 15, 2024, Working Group Meeting Participants

Laura Minzer	Illinois Life and Health Insurance Council
Kate Morthland	Illinois Life and Health Insurance Council