

The Mental Health Reform Act of 2016

Strengthens leadership and accountability for federal mental health programs:

- Codifies a Chief Medical Officer at the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to advise the Administrator and promote evidence-based and promising best practices.
- Requires SAMHSA to develop a strategic plan with measurable outcomes and report on progress toward strategic priorities, including how programs have met the measurable outcomes.
- Establishes an Inter-Departmental Serious Mental Illness Coordinating Committee to coordinate activities across the federal government in order to improve services for individuals with serious mental illness.
- Ensures the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) has a clear role with respect to evaluating programs and activities for mental health and substance use disorders.

Ensures programs facilitate the development of and incorporate the most up-to-date approaches to treat mental health conditions:

- Codifies the Office of Policy, Planning, and Innovation (OPPI) within SAMHSA to provide leadership in coordinating and improving policies and programs within SAMHSA, and to support innovation in evidence-based and promising practices and programs.
- Modernizes grants for priority mental health needs of regional and national significance.
- Ensures that SAMHSA regularly evaluates and disseminates evidence-based practices and programs.

Supports flexibility for states and communities to improve mental health care:

- Modernizes the block grant for mental health services and promotes the use of evidence-based practices within states, including early intervention programs for individuals with serious mental illness.
- Allows states to submit a joint application for mental health and substance use disorder block grants to reduce redundancies and inefficiencies.

Promotes increased access to mental health care, including for at-risk populations:

- Improves a current grant program related to integration of mental health and primary care with a new approach to drive significant reforms that improve care and health outcomes for patients with mental and physical health conditions.
- Modernizes grant programs to support mental health and substance use disorder services for homeless individuals.
- Modernizes the Residential Treatment Programs for Pregnant and Parenting Women, including a pilot program to help states identify and address gaps in services for women.
- Improves access to mental health care for children by providing grants to promote behavioral health integration in pediatric primary care through the development and improvement of statewide child psychiatry access programs.
- Supports the development and training of the behavioral health workforce through increased coordination and planning and modernization of training programs.
- Ensures the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24/7 to individuals seeking help, and ensures military veterans calling the hotline are connected with a veterans' suicide prevention hotline specialist.
- Codifies a hotline and online referral tool to ensure that patient and their families always know where to turn to find care for mental or substance use disorders.

Takes important steps to improve patient care, including mental health parity protections:

- Strengthens the enforcement of existing mental health parity protections by issuing new guidance to health plans with respect to how they disclose information to patients including how they establish and apply non-quantitative treatment limitations on mental health and substance use disorder coverage.
- Directs the Secretary to ensure that health care providers, patients, their families, and others involved with mental health or substance use disorder treatment have access to usable resources clarifying the permitted uses and disclosures of protected health information under the HIPAA Privacy Rule, including identifying and developing model training programs on sharing protected health information with patients and their loved ones.
- Improves Federal and State coordination by establishing an enforcement "action plan" informed by key stakeholders. The "action plan" can help lead to streamlined information for patients and more consistent enforcement of mental health parity laws.