



MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF COLORADO

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COLORADO MAKES ADVANCES IN ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE *Governor Ritter Will Sign Bill Expanding Mental Health Insurance Coverage*

DENVER, Colo. Wednesday, May 30, 2007 - Governor Bill Ritter will sign Senate Bill 36 into law today, legislation that expands mental health insurance coverage through employee benefit programs. Mental illness as the leading cause of disability in the United States and this legislation is an active step toward reducing the stigma associated with mental disorders and expanding access and affordability of care to more Coloradoans seeking mental health services. The First Lady of Colorado, Mrs. Jeannie Ritter, bill sponsors, mental health consumers, advocates and professionals will join Governor Ritter when the signing takes place at the Capitol Rotunda at 10:30 a.m.

“We are happy to see the gap between coverage for physical and mental illness close a little more and are also pleased that legislators received the message of the impacts mental illness has in the workplace – to productivity, to the bottom line, to quality of life,” states **Jeanne M. Rohner, President and CEO of the Mental Health Association of Colorado**. “Mental illness affects as much as 20 percent of our population during any given year here in Colorado. These illnesses are successfully treated everyday, so the more that we can do to encourage treatment and prevention efforts, the better the chances for recovery and mental wellness.”

Bill sponsor, **Senator Moe Keller** adds, “Untreated mental illness has a huge cost on business and tax payers alike. By expanding coverage we know we can reduce such costs and restore many mentally ill people to productive employees and tax payers.”

Representative Debbie Stafford, co-sponsor of the bill adds, “I believe that untreated mental health care is often treated once a person has committed a crime or impacted public safety. Waiting for this high cost treatment is inhumane and a financial burden on tax paying citizens. Early intervention creates healthier citizens and reduces the negative impacts on society.”

Currently in Colorado, insurance coverage is required for six mental health diagnoses; schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder; bipolar disorder; major depression; specific obsessive-compulsive disorder and panic disorder. Today’s signing expands mental health insurance coverage to include these additional disorders: posttraumatic stress disorder; substance abuse; dysthymia and cyclothymia (depressive disorders), social phobia; agoraphobia; panic disorder; general anxiety disorder and eating disorders anorexia and bulimia.

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About the Mental Health Association of Colorado

The Mental Health Association of Colorado is the catalyst and voice for the Colorado mental health movement. Through Education, Advocacy and Outreach, we provide resources to Coloradans affected by the entire spectrum of mental health issues.