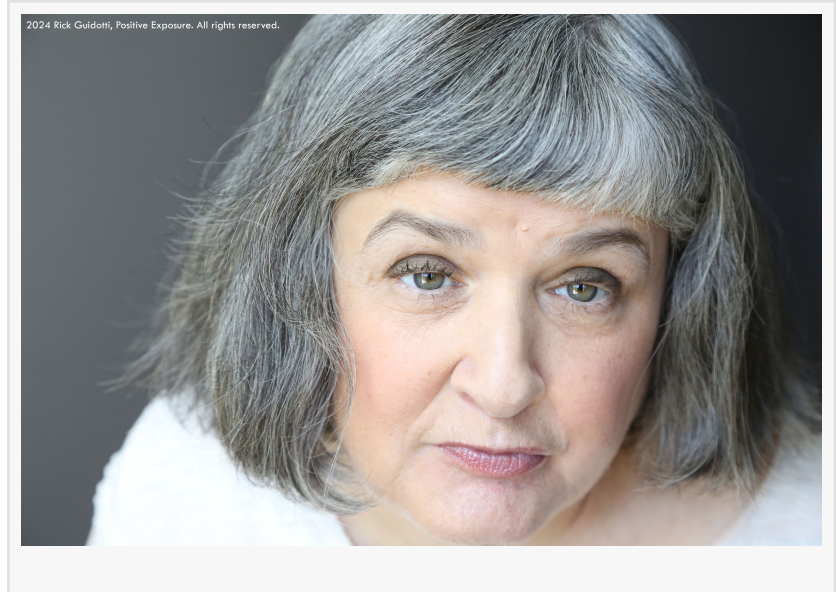


# New Federal Rules Expand Access to Mental Health Services for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

*Improvements in federal protections highlight the growing need for enhancements in training for clinicians providing mental health support to people with IDD.*

CLEARWATER, FL, UNITED STATES, October 7, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ --

Federal agencies recently issued [new rules](#) to provide insured Americans with more equitable access to mental health benefits. The rules will include several improvements to existing federal law, expanding access to mental health services for Americans with autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who increasingly suffer from instances of poor mental health.



The U.S. Departments of the Treasury, Labor, and Health and Human Services issued final rules to revise the Paul Wellstone and Peter Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act ([MHPAEA](#)). Initially passed in 2008, the federal law was intended to prohibit health insurance providers from placing greater restrictions on mental health and substance use disorder benefits as compared to medical and surgical benefits. Despite the protections under this law, Americans continue to face significant restrictions in securing mental health benefits.

“

It can be difficult to diagnose a mental health condition in someone with intellectual disabilities, especially if they don't use words to communicate.”

*Dr. Craig Escudé, President of  
IntellectAbility*

The final rules will now require insurers to define

conditions recorded under diagnostic categories in the mental, behavioral, and neurodevelopmental chapter of the International Classification of Diseases and the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders as eligible for

mental health benefits. The new rules will provide greater federal protections for people with autism and IDD who suffer from mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and others.

[The Link Center](#) reports an estimated 30-70% of people with IDD also suffer from a mental health condition. Despite an increasingly high prevalence of mental health instability, there continues to be a chronic lack of a whole-person approach supporting individuals with co-occurring IDD and mental health service needs.

“People with disabilities may experience mental health conditions at rates higher than the general population and are often left without support or receiving services and supports that are available but not tailored to what they need,” says Mary P. Sowers, Executive Director of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services (NASDDDS).

In addition to her role at NASDDDS, Sowers also works with the Link Center, an organization that bridges IDD and mental health systems by supporting state agencies with policy development, service design, and service coordination. “Our systems of support must work across the siloes to ensure that people have access to the clinical and home and community-based services that will enable them to thrive in their communities.”

While laws that protect healthcare access continue to improve, people with IDD still face difficult barriers in accessing appropriate mental health services including:

- Long-held misconceptions that people with disabilities don't have the mental capacity to suffer from mental health issues
- Difficulty associated with treating mental health instability in people who don't communicate verbally
- Misdiagnoses resulting in overprescribing of inappropriate medications, often leading to additional mental and physical health issues
- Physicians lacking the education to properly assess, diagnose, and treat mental health issues for people with autism and IDD

“It can be difficult to diagnose a mental health condition in someone with intellectual disabilities, especially if they don't use words to communicate,” says Dr. Craig Escudé, President of IntellectAbility. “You have to be more attuned to changes in behavior and be careful not to dismiss those changes based on a person's disability.”

IntellectAbility provides tools and training to agencies, governmental entities, and supporters of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to foster early recognition and mitigation of health risks.

“When we have physical illnesses, they can affect our mental health just as mental health issues can lead to increased physical health problems. If we don't treat both aspects of health, we are not treating the whole person. By making improvements in healthcare training, we can empower

clinicians to know what to look for and how to act when people with disabilities present signs of mental health instability.”

IntellectAbility provides tools and training to agencies, governmental entities, and supporters of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to foster early recognition and mitigation of health risks, thereby improving health and wellness. One such tool is the Health Risk Screening Tool (HRST), of which they are the sole developer, producer, and distributor. The web-based HRST is the most widely used and validated health risk screening instrument for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

IntellectAbility also provides numerous health-related and person-centered service training for supporters of people with IDD. With an unrelenting focus, IntellectAbility works to fulfill its mission of improving health and quality of life for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and other at-risk populations. For more information, visit [www.ReplacingRisk.com](http://www.ReplacingRisk.com)

Daniel Mutter  
MutterWorks  
+1 305-926-1792  
daniel@mutterworks.com

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/749658100>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2024 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.