

MH/SUD Parity Program FAQs

Updated: January 28, 2020

Overview

The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA) requires employers, insurers, and Medicaid managed care plans that offer mental health and substance use disorder (MH/SUD) services to offer them at parity with medical and surgical benefits. While this law has been in effect for over a decade, there continues to be variation in implementation by market and jurisdiction.

1. Q: Why did URAC decide to develop a Parity Program?

A: URAC has long recognized the importance of parity and the impact it has on patients. We have historically included standards requiring insurers and providers to address parity and access to behavioral health services in our accreditation programs where appropriate. However, this marks the first time in which we have an entire program suite dedicated to parity compliance. The suite of programs is intended to offer differing levels of oversight taking into account the maturity of the organization's parity compliance program. More specifically, ParityManager™ can be used as an internal parity compliance tool to strengthen parity compliance *within* an organization. For organization's who feel confident in their parity compliance programs, ParityManager™ may serve as the platform for those organizations who seek external parity compliance validation via Parity Accreditation. Given the differing levels of oversight and complex nature of the laws governing parity, we believe a national standard for parity compliance is a critical solution to improve compliance and ultimately improve the care patients receive.

2. Q: What is the value of the Parity Program to prospective clients?

A: It allows clients to demonstrate their commitment to parity, helps ensure they have a framework in place to develop a comprehensive compliance program and validates the activity of insurers. It also distinguishes clients in the marketplace by noting their capacity to comply with MHPAEA and the implementing regulations.

3. Q: What type of organizations may apply for the Parity Program?

A: Any organization can purchase the Compliance Guide, but only health plans and TPAs are eligible to obtain a license for ParityManager™ and/or apply for accreditation.

4. Q: What type of recognition is available with the Parity Program?

A: The Parity Accreditation is a three-year accreditation. There is no formal recognition for purchasing the MH/SUD Regulatory Compliance Guide or ParityManager™.

- 5. Q: Do organizations have to purchase both ParityManager™ and Parity Accreditation at the same time? What is the relationship between the two parity programs?**
A: No, organizations don't have to purchase ParityManager™ and Parity Accreditation at the same time. However, an organization can't purchase the Parity Accreditation without first having ParityManager™. While it can be sold as a stand-a-lone product, ParityManager™ is currently the application platform for the Parity Accreditation.
- 6. Q: Are measures required as part of the Parity Program?**
A: No, measures are not currently required as part of the Parity Program.
- 7. Q: May I get a demo of ParityManager™ prior to purchase?**
A: Yes.
- 8. Q: May I get a free trial of ParityManager™ prior to purchase?**
A: No.
- 9. Q: What type of information is uploaded into ParityManager™?**
A: Information needed to assess your capacity to comply with parity such as policies and procedures, an organizational chart, written narratives, financial documents, benefit classifications and actuarial analyses etc.
- 10. Q: Is information uploaded into ParityManager™ viewable to URAC?**
A: Yes, however, we ask that you don't upload any protected health information (PHI). Any PHI that is uploaded will automatically trigger our PHI protocol and we will not view it.
- 11. Q: How long will I have access to ParityManager™ after signing a contract?**
A: You will have access to ParityManager™ for the duration of your license.
- 12. Q: Am I able to install ParityManager™ on multiple computers?**
A: Yes. In addition, there is currently no limit on the number of users that are able to access ParityManager™ under a specific license.
- 13. Q: Does an organization's purchase of the Parity Program guarantee compliance with MHPAEA, the implementing regulations and/or my state requirements?**
A: URAC is not a regulatory body and does not have the authority to guarantee your compliance with MHPAEA. However, purchasing the Parity Program demonstrates one's capacity to comply with MHPAEA and the implementing regulations. In addition, it allows organizations to establish a framework for an enterprise-wide compliance program, efficiently prepare for market conduct exams



and requests for proposals (RFPs), reduces regulatory enforcement and litigation risk and ultimately promotes quality improvement.

For more information or to schedule a demo, call 202-216-9403 or email BusinessDevelopment@urac.org