

### Two Former Representatives Step up to Help Parity

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No one thought passing the national parity law would be easy – but it happened with the hard work of activists. Now having parity implemented is the focus of a new group dedicated to end discrimination against individuals and families who seek services for mental health and substance use disorders.

Former Members of Congress Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Jim Ramstad (R-MN) announced in March that they are re-energizing their efforts to help finalize implementation of a law that they worked to enact, the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, signed into law by President George W. Bush in 2008.

The [Parity Implementation Coalition \(PIC\)](#) was formed to help ensure that the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equality Act of 2008 (MHPAEA) - a federal law that protects a group health plan's mental health and/or substance use coverage benefits - is properly enforced. PIC provides online resources with information about what the federal law covers; how a state's law works with the Federal Parity Act; how to file an insurance claim with your health plan when benefits have been denied and other issues related to the law's implementation

The coalition is particularly interested in hearing from patients or providers who has complaints or concerns. These reports help identify potential patterns of critical concern to federal regulators.

To better understand how the law is being implemented across the country, Kennedy and Ramstad announced a series of field hearings that will be convened during the next year leading up to the 50th anniversary of the enactment of the John F. Kennedy Community Mental Health Services Act.

Ramstad and Kennedy announced a field hearings will be held throughout the nation. A list of current scheduled hearing is below or visit [http://parityispersonal.org/Parity Field Hearings](http://parityispersonal.org/Parity_Field_Hearings) for regular updates.

“This is an extraordinary commitment from two individuals who championed parity in Congress, to now help move forward implementation as private citizens,” said [Cynthia Moreno Tuohy, NCAC II, CCDC III, SAP](#), NAADAC’s Executive Director.

Pat Taylor, Executive Director of Faces & Voices of Recovery, added, “We stand ready to work with Patrick Kennedy, Jim Ramstad, the Administration, a bipartisan team of House and Senate supporters and the public to ensure that the parity law is fully implemented and enforced so that the millions of Americans in and seeking recovery from mental and addictive disorders can access the non-discriminatory care promised to them under the law, benefiting themselves, their families and communities.”

Providers, individuals served and state and local representatives will speak about parity implementation and enforcement at the forums.

The forum schedule is:

April 26 - Kalamazoo, MI  
11:15 am - 12:45 pm  
Radisson Hotel  
Meadows Room

100 West Michigan Avenue  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

June 26 – D.C. Metro

7:30 pm

Village of Friendship Heights Village Center

4433 South Park Ave.

Chevy Chase, MD

July 17, 2012 – Minneapolis, MN

6:30 pm

Minnesota Recovery Connection

253 State Street, St. Paul, MN

August 6, 2012 – Chicago, IL

5:00 pm

Union League Club of Chicago

65 West Jackson Blvd

Chicago, IL 60604

September 17, 2012 – Los Angeles, CA

6:30 pm

The Chicago School of Professional Psychology at Los Angeles

617 West 7th Street

Los Angeles, CA 90017

September 24, 2012 – New York City

9:30 am

New York State Psychiatric Institute, Columbia University Medical Center's Department of Psychiatry

1051 Riverside Drive

New York, NY 10032

October 9, 2012 – Delray Beach, FL

To sign up to host a field hearing or be a witness, e-mail [info@parityispersonal.org](mailto:info@parityispersonal.org) or visit <http://parityispersonal.org/> for more information.

## Parity has Been Passed, the Next Step is Implementation

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